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# The Broomscod Collar

Gillian Olivier

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To H. S. REID

To whom time is so little object that she has been known to drive through the Fourteenth Century in a two seater Morris-Oxford.

Nous sommes partis une fois de plus en chasse, et une fois de plus nous n'avons pas atteint notre gibier: la vérité. Nous verrons si elle ne s'est pas refugiée dans le roman.

*André Maurois*
(Aspects de la Biographie)

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# PREFATORY NOTE

This book is not a novel in the sense that the story is fictitious. I have tried to keep as closely as possible to the historical facts of Richard's life and although I have presented them with the freedom of the novelist, the picture I offer is based on a careful study of Richard the Second as he appears in contemporary chronicles and records, and in the pages of the chief modern authorities upon his reign. I venture to hope that an imaginative biography of this kind may throw some light on the problem of his fall, rather than obscure it.

# CONTENTS

PART ONE
PAGE 1

PART TWO
PAGE 99

PART THREE
PAGE 199

# ILLUSTRATIONS


KING RICHARD II *Frontispiece*

WILTON DIPTYCH *(Left Panel)* 28

WILTON DIPTYCH (*Right Panel*) 38

WILTON DIPTYCH *(Reverse of Left Panel)* 92

ROYAL GOLD CUP 165

WILTON DIPTYCH *(Reverse of Right Panel)* 224

# PART I

## CHAPTER I

### I

One spring morning in the year 1381 a stout, middle-aged man in cardinal's robes was riding out of London towards Westminster. His face was darker than most of the faces among whom he passed, and there were not many in the crowd of busy working people who had such an expression of self-satisfied content. It was altogether an unpleasant face: small, narrow eyes, a large sensuous mouth, and the whole contour of cheek and jaw lost among rolls of fat. Yet this man, the Cardinal Pileo di Prata, Archbishop of Ravenna, was not the mere animal he looked astride the infinitely more noble animal that was carrying him, for he came from the most civilized race in the world and had absorbed a good deal of its culture. He had enough perception to delight in the pale pastel colours of the country he was visiting, to enjoy the freshness of London in May, with its young green trees rising triumphantly from out of a sea of white blossom and its sober grey towers three hundred years old which seemed to rebuke the hilarity of the little new houses that scuttled down the hill behind them, their red roofs bending towards one another like children telling secrets. In front of him were green

fields going down to Westminster, behind him the grey wall studded with turrets, holding the city in a warm motherly embrace.

Though the cardinal perceived these things and was delighted by them, he could not help thinking out neat and witty ways of describing them that the Holy Father would enjoy listening to, until he became so absorbed that he forgot to look at them any more. Instead, the contemplation of his own talents and good taste kept him fully occupied for the remainder of his journey; and it was not until the Abbey itself came in sight through the trees that he was reminded of his mission to the King and began to think out what he should say.

He had seen various members of the government already and he had gathered from them that the King's marriage with Princess Ann, the sister of the Emperor, could now be considered a *fait accompli,* but when he hinted at the project nearest His Eminence's heart, he had not met with any encouragement. He relied now on his interview with the King. Richard was known to be spoilt and extremely obstinate; he had only to coax and flatter and the thing would be done. What boy could resist the vision of himself at the head of a crusading army fighting the enemies of Holy Church? The Chancellor might shake his head and say there was no money, but if Richard wanted to go on a crusade, money would of course be found.

Thus he mused while the royal household pre-

pared itself for his coming. Richard himself, being nervous, as he always was before any ceremony, had vented his feelings on his cousin, Henry of Derby. It seemed that to tell Henry he had a face like the back of a sow was the only way of forgetting the curious movements that were going on just below his chest. Besides Henry's face was rather like the back of a sow, anyway.

But the King that Pileo saw, in the great hall of the Palace, seated above his courtiers in their splendid dresses, on a very large chair all by himself, was extremely gracious and charming. He spoke slowly and carefully, but of course failed to conceal from the Cardinal that he was tremendously excited.

"I am so glad you have come, Father," he said, "I hope you will describe the Princess Ann, and tell me if I shall like her. Is she beautiful?"

Pileo hesitated for a suitable interval before answering. "Well," he said at last, "Beauty is a difficult word is it not? We say this and that is beautiful——"

"But we do not say that the Princess Ann is beautiful," broke in the Earl of Oxford in his quick high voice—an affected voice, his enemies said.

Pileo laughed. "She is very much loved, my lord." His tone was apologetic. "She is good but not dull, gentle but not colourless, learned, but her knowledge is well concealed, and she loves good music and beautiful painting."

"I like that," said Richard, "you'll have to sing

to her, Robert. But," he added, " I don't want an ugly wife."

" Oh, she isn't ugly," exclaimed the Cardinal, shocked. " But it is difficult to say she is beautiful in the presence of such radiant beauty. In Bohemia she is not considered ugly."

" There is nothing the Holy Father wants more than this marriage," Pileo resumed presently, very seriously. " Do you realize that the Princess Ann, sister of the Emperor of Christendom, might be sold to a schismatic? There is no other word for it but sold." He saw Richard staring at him with horrified eyes and was encouraged to proceed further. " King Charles of France will pay any price you could name to prevent the Emperor from going to war against him, and I sadly fear that His Highness may succumb to the bribe. You don't know how the Holy Father loves you," he went on, deeply moved by the picture he was creating. " The stories he has heard of your devotion to the Church and her holy Sacraments. He knows that he has at least one son who will fight her battles and scourge her enemies."

The King's eyes were shining. The soft low voice went on.

" You have had visions, probably from Our Blessed Lady herself. It is to youth and to beauty and to courage that she comes. It is among boys that she finds faithful soldiers. We "—and the fat face looked despondent—" we are all too old now."

Then the King and the Cardinal had a long talk,

during which Richard led him over the Palace and gardens and finally to the Abbey itself. But before leaving the Palace, he showed him his private chapel, and Pileo, though he admired the chalice and the altar-cloth, and the tiny illuminated missal, observed that there was something missing.

"The Emperor Charles had an altar-piece painted for him before he died," he said, "which just seemed to put the finishing touch to his chapel." He spoke absently, as though he had forgotten where he was. Richard's keen, rather hurt boy's voice should have reminded him.

"What's it like?" he asked, very tensely.

"It's in the form of a diptych, and stands just here below the cross. It shows the Emperor kneeling on one side and on the other, Our Lady. Symbolical of course of his devotion to Our Lady and that he was her specially beloved son."

"I shall have one too," Richard cried; "with my patron saints as well."

"And it should symbolise, surely, your devotion as a fighting son," urged the Cardinal, half closing his eyes. "Something of this sort. Angels carrying the banner of St. George and each one bearing your arms. Your saints presenting you to Our Lady, and the eyes of all upon the crusading banner. Something of the sort."

Richard was enchanted. "Abbot Litlington will find us a painter. We'll go over and see him now. He is always engaging people to paint his Bibles and service books. One painted me my

*Liber Regalis,* which I must show you sometime, and there is a splendid portrait of me in it. It really is exactly like me."

II

Richard was so much excited about his portrait that he could not sleep. He lay awake in his enormous bed, staring at the golden angels embroidered upon the blue silk tester above him. Their flat wooden faces were curiously distorted and broken because of the folds in the curtain, and yet they still retained their superb impassivity—a younger Richard used to think that martyrs torn by lions must have looked like that. But he wasn't thinking of them now; he was thinking of other angels, his own angels, bearing his White Hart on their breasts. Heaven was full of them—legions of angels hurrying to do the bidding of no one but himself. It was so exciting and wonderful that he could not help flinging himself over and over, and beating his legs violently against the yielding softness of the feather mattress. Then he was too hot, and the May moon was streaming into his window: he couldn't stay in his bed, enveloped in heavy curtains, when the night was cool outside. He sprang out and knelt on the window-sill in his little linen shift, gazing out upon the garden sleeping in the moonlight, and the broad river lying motionless like a huge silver shield. A nightingale was

singing desperately and its yearning mingled with his yearning joined the prayer he found himself throwing out to Heaven in this strange new ecstasy that had come upon him.

He saw himself at the head of all the armies in Christendom, charging through a storm of arrows which glanced off his armour like drops of water. And the sky above crowded thickly with angels—Michael, Gabriel, Raphael—riding with quivering lances against countless dragons studded with the fleur-de-lis of the King of France. But they themselves bore the White Hart of the King of England, and the White Hart led all Europe in the Holy War against the enemies of the Church. It was so wonderful, this vision, that it hurt somewhere down in his throat, as it must be hurting the nightingale to sing that song.

Eventually the cold drove him back to his bed, and the curtains seemed to shut out the vision. He found himself thinking out the more prosaic details of the picture that was to embody it. Himself kneeling at the feet of the Blessed Virgin, looking up at the Holy Boy—or, no, hadn't they agreed that he was to be on the other half of the diptych with his three patron saints, so as to leave room for the angels? That was what the painter had suggested. He remembered then that he had forgotten to tell him that there were to be exactly eleven angels; ever since he had had those eleven angels painted at the shrine of Our Lady-le-Pew as a thankoffering after his coronation, he had felt that exactly that

number were always watching over him. Then he thought of the three saints—St. John the Baptist, St. Edmund, and St. Edward the Confessor—and the picture of them presenting him to the Child Jesus made him roll over ecstatically and bite his pillow. Another boy, the Cardinal had said, destined to lead the sluggish world back to truth and righteousness. . . . His thoughts ran rapidly on, till he saw himself dying a martyr to the Holy Cause, and all the Cardinals seated round the Papal Chair, discussing his canonisation. But when he began to picture the news reaching the English Court, he suddenly thought of Robert de Vere, and then the whole vision broke to pieces before the onslaught of his laughter. Somehow, he couldn't imagine Robert thinking his canonisation anything but hopelessly funny.

## III

Compline was over, and the brethren were all moving in slow procession through the cloisters. The painter, Nicholas Cheriton, turned his head very slightly as he passed his desk, and deftly caught up his book of cotton paper without stepping out of the procession. It contained most precious strips of linen dyed in ultramarine blue, and it would be ruined if it were left all night in the damp cloisters. The only safe place for it was under his pillow. Old Hugh Walsingham, who had taught him how

to paint when he was a gay apprentice and the religious life very far away, always said that you couldn't be too careful with clothlet colours.

He saw Hugh's face distinctly among the black-robed figures winding through the cloisters, so close that he could hardly believe that twenty years had passed since he had last seen it. A thin, lined and unhappy face it was, pale like the clay he modelled, with small but very haunting brown eyes. It would be a good face for a John the Baptist. . . . He pulled himself up suddenly. These were not the thoughts to be in the mind as one approached the Holy Cross at the dormitory steps.

Soberly in the silence of the dormitory, he thought over his day. It had been another splendid one: tumbling out of bed and creeping down into the cold Abbey for Matins and Lauds, and then bed again till the noisy chime of the bell roused you for Prime; after Prime, standing about near the lavatories waiting your turn to plunge your hands into the cold water and to scrub furiously at your face with a towel. Then breakfast of black bread and wine (now Lent was over) and after breakfast chapel again for Lady Mass, and then the solemn procession to the Chapter House to hear Peter Combe complain for the thousandth time that somebody had been stealing eggs. Nicholas greatly enjoyed this peaceful opportunity to stare at the paintings on the wall (certainly those early painters knew how to manage a group of faces) or at the hands of the Prior Richard Exeter drooping loosely

and beautifully over the arm of his carved seat. After which on this particular morning, he had taken old Bartholomew and marched him out into the cloisters; Bartholomew, always cold, had dared to say it was still winter—winter, when the sun was pouring through the cloisters and the birds were singing their hearts out on the budding trees. Then High Mass, which Nicholas loved most of all, with the choir vying with the song of the birds, and the incense swarming up the birch-like pillars to the roof.

You came out of chapel radiant, but certainly hungry, especially since the smell of cooking began to chase the incense out of your nose as you got nearer to the refectory, and the clattering of dishes to drown the last notes of the "Nunc Dimittis," which persisted in echoing in your head. Then nothing to stop you painting from twelve o'clock till five—painting away in the cloisters while the air came in soft and sweet, and laden with the scent of fresh grass, and the novices in the far corner bent wearily over their Latin.

But this day had suddenly become altogether different from any other when the Abbot sent for Nicholas as he sat painting in the cloisters, and in the presence of not only the King but a Cardinal from Rome, had told him he was to paint an altar-piece for the royal chapel. And the Cardinal admired his earlier portrait of the King—but he hadn't cared about the Cardinal for all that, and had decided secretly that he wouldn't carry out any

of his suggestions. The man had no more idea of grouping angels than he had of flying. He could give orders for the left-hand panel if he liked, but the angels Nicholas would see to himself.

Yes, it had been a splendid day, and with a deep sense of his own shortcomings, Nicholas offered it to God. "*Gratias ago tibi, Domine Sancte,*" he murmured from the bottom of his heart.

## IV

He was wrestling with the problem of how to convey on to a flat panel the round childish outline of Richard's cheek, when a sudden ruddy light was flung across his parchment and he knew that the peasants had reached Westminster. "Even if there won't be a King by to-morrow I shall finish that picture," said Nicholas Cheriton. And he began to wonder what colours could catch even the slightest likeness to his wonderful red-gold hair.

## CHAPTER II

### I

With London in flames all round her, and its streets crowded with wild and terrible people, the Princess tried to pray for her son. While she tried to think of the Blessed Virgin's sufferings, and to remind herself that it was precisely her pain that the Holy Mother had borne, all she thought of was Richard, which brought her no peace of mind whatever. Richard practically defenceless, riding from Baynard's Castle to Westminster. . . These last few days he had utterly changed. She never knew what he was going to do next: whether he would burst into tears of impotent rage or smile at her paternally and tell her not to be frightened. What was this son that she had borne, was he devil or angel, now that he was no longer her baby boy? She had seen him storming at poor Archbishop Sudbury, shouting in a passion that he would meet the peasants and speak to them himself. Then he seemed almost devil. And now, quietly and gravely he had suggested returning to Westminster to hear Mass and to visit St. Edward's shrine. "But you mustn't go," he had said to her; "you've had enough adventures already."

Yes, she had indeed. The brutes had touched

her, one had tried to kiss her. . . And to them Richard was going, persisting with the idea that he could manage them and could make them go back to their homes.

But she would never see him again. She knew that already, so that her prayers seemed a mockery. But she could not think of his end, she could only think of him as she last saw him, sitting on his horse and smiling down at her, with a very demon lurking in his eyes.

Messengers had come from him from time to time. He had slept last night at Westminster, and was going out to-day to meet the rebels at Smithfield. His last message had been that he would need her prayers. And yet she could not pray now, waiting as she was for the news to come that he was dead, and expecting every drunken shout she heard to resolve itself into the cries of the mob returning from Smithfield with his head on a pole. Though he needed her prayers she could not pray.

They told her that he had passed the painter, Nicholas Cheriton, in the cloisters, and had caught him by the arm. "My angels have got rather a different crusade to fight now," he had said, and the messengers told her he had laughed wildly. (They did not dare say to the Princess that he had sounded hysterical.)

The friar, Thomas Rushook, was praying at the altar. The servers looked as though they were praying too. Yet she, desperately kneeling before the Lord's Body, could not pray at all, but could

only be painfully sure that Richard was dead. She suddenly realized that that was what always happened: when you really needed God, you found He had forsaken you. He forsook even His Son. Those devout people crouched in attitudes of reverence before His throne, didn't know, poor fools, that He wasn't there. . . .

An excited page almost ran into the chapel, jerked his head hurriedly at the altar, and approached the Princess's chair. "A messenger has come, Madam," he whispered; "the King is safe."

She raised her head and stared at him blankly. "Don't be silly," she said, at last, sharply; "how can you talk about safety, when God has forsaken us?" And as he still protested that Wat Tyler was dead and his followers grovelling at the King's feet, she rose from her knees and caught him by the shoulder. "There is no safety, I tell you," she said. "No safety anywhere. Do you think it is the prayers of the Virgin that have saved the King to-day? I tell you, my child, it is the power that the Devil has given him." She gave a shuddering sob, remembering again her fears at that strange new spirit in him that seemed to have sprung from hell.

Then he himself came back to her, at first the new Richard she was beginning to fear, with that light in his eyes and that curious smile. She fell upon him, all her weight—and that was much—resting in his startled arms; and confused words tumbled out of her mouth. "My child—they said

you were killed—what have you done?"

"Done!" he shouted loudly and terribly—it was undoubtedly the Devil that so cried within him—"Only won back my kingdom, mother. Everybody else was afraid!"

Then as she gazed at him more in horror than in pride, he turned into a little boy again and cried in her arms. "Oh, mother, you can't think"—and he broke off shaking with sobs—"you can't think how they smelt." Certainly Richard was himself again, and in his mother's aching overjoyed heart, God came back to His throne.

## II

But though he was a little boy just for one day, and had to be soothed and sung to by the Princess before sleep chased away that awful picture of Wat Tyler's grey-green face, with foam-flecked beer still trickling out of mouth and nose, he woke up next morning and many other mornings, determined to be a man. He would see justice carried out, he would go round himself with the commissioners, he was no longer a baby. But his mother was not disturbed by these manifestations of his will, for this was the proper normal way for a son of the Black Prince to behave. Moreover, she saw where it was leading, and that as soon as Richard asserted himself, the enforced alliance between herself and John of Gaunt could come to an end. She had seen

that when the old King died, there was no hope of securing Richard's succession peacefully unless she made up her quarrel with her brother-in-law, but she hated him nevertheless, and every year of Richard's reign he had grown more powerful. So when her son came back from his tour round the rebellious counties in July, and was preparing to enjoy himself in the country, she took several opportunities of speaking to him as though he were quite grown-up. And lectures were given in the Palace by the broadminded Thomas Rushook, both on certain important passages in *Bracton* and on Wyclif's *De Officio Regis*.

So Richard and Henry of Derby, sitting side by side, were instructed in the theory and the office of kingship. Henry took very careful notes in a neat and elaborate script, but he didn't seem to find the matter particularly interesting. Richard himself was so absorbed that he often forgot to take any notes at all, and was surprised to find at the end of each lecture, that his tablet was covered all over with untidy little patterns. But when he looked at them he remembered how he had learnt that a subject owed obedience to his King even more than a monk to his abbot; that a King was the true originator of positive law; that the King is under no person, but only under God. A crooked little picture of a spider's web would remind him how Dante Alighieri had written that the human race depends on a unity in wills, which cannot exist unless there is one will dominating and ruling all the rest;

the carefully constructed backbone of a fish would recall the Angelic Doctor's comparison of the State with an army and his conclusion that its dominating good is in the purpose of its leader. But he did copy out to learn by heart what Bracton said of the purpose of Kingship, and the words ate into his soul.

*But for this purpose he has been created and elected, that he should do justice to all persons, that in him the Lord should sit, and that he should of himself decide his own judgments and maintain and defend what he has justly judged.*

"In him the Lord should sit," That was what his coronation had meant. Kingship was a Sacrament.

Another sentence gave him great pleasure of a very different kind: he found it in the *De Officio Regis*. It ran—*A King, in time of his own or his kingdom's need may seize the temporal possessions of both laymen and priests at his discretion.* Richard pointed it out to Henry, laughing maliciously. "I shall take all yours away when you're Duke of Lancaster, if you don't behave yourself," he teased him, and Henry was very angry. "You'll have to wait for a time of need," he snapped back, but Richard went on laughing.

He asked the friar eager questions about the John Wyclif who had written this book. He learnt that this was a tiresome person, a man who borrowed most of his ideas from other people and those that were his own were heretical. "Even this," said

Rushook, "is taken very largely from William of Ockham. But he puts the matter clearly and simply, and of course one should read him, as he's rather in the public eye at the moment, and various people are taking him up for their own reasons. Your lady mother is delighted with his translation of the Bible, and there's no doubt that people do want to read the Scriptures in their native tongue to a very large extent just now. I came across him, you know, at Bruges in '71," and the friar trailed off into a succession of reminiscences. "But a somewhat cramped theologian, and a man without the humility to perceive the true purpose of the Holy See. Anything he says must of course be taken with a pinch of salt."

III

John of Gaunt arrived from Scotland when the Commissioners had succeeded in restoring law and order. Richard's associations with him had always been pleasant; he had been extremely charming on the day the old King died, and had given the new one rides round the courtyard on his shoulder. But when he saw him again, Richard was struck with a terrible shyness. He had forgotten that his uncle was quite as splendid as this. He stared silently at the magnificently embroidered houpelande, the tight scarlet sleeves which darted out of it with every movement of his white hands, and the

gold chain hanging round his neck. This was a prince after his own heart, and he thought of his other uncles with amused scorn. Thomas of Woodstock, who always chose such appalling combinations of colours, and Edmund of Langley, who never seemed able to make even the most expensive clothes look anything on his long shapeless body. The romantic glamour which had surrounded Lionel of Clarence, that mythical uncle he had never seen, was swiftly transferred to the visible and carnal being who so marvellously was John of Gaunt.

This splendid person was even now complimenting him on his action at Smithfield; referring gaily and philosophically to the destruction of his own London house—the Savoy Palace, the most marvellous house in England; he had some good stories to tell about the Scots and the Earl of Northumberland (whom he appeared to dislike); he turned fiercely upon his son at one point, and told him to take his fingers out of his mouth. All of which pleased Richard greatly, but especially the last, as Henry's habit of chewing his fingers had got on his nerves more than once. "But now we must talk business," he said to his nephew.

Richard was determined to appear sensible of the problems and difficulties that affected his realm. "I suppose we ought to do something about the French war, which we're practically pledged to the Emperor to carry on." He felt proud of that sentence, and guessed that it had caused a slight

sensation among the younger members of the household. He wondered what Robert thought of it. "But I don't know how we're going to raise the money," he added; "we could only do it last year by imposing the poll tax and you see what happened then. We don't want another rebellion."

But John's eyes were travelling about in a most disconcerting manner, as the servants passed in and out of the hall, preparing dinner. "You seem to keep a very large establishment," he said irrelevantly.

Richard was appalled. Not only had his uncle paid no attention to his remark, but he had definitely insulted him. The patronising tone, the implied suggestion that he—King Richard—had no business to keep a large establishment (and after all it was smaller than that of John himself) first amazed and then infuriated him.

"Large!" he shouted, "it's a good deal smaller than it ought to be."

But his uncle proceeded to tell him that it simply wouldn't do to spend all this money when the country couldn't afford a very necessary war with France. He was to remember that the commons were paying for all this luxury.

"But a king must live," Richard cried.

"Yes, yes, he must live, but one of the first duties of a king is to learn to live of his own. The money which comes in from your manors ought to be enough to pay for the upkeep of your household. Do I"—and John fingered his gold collar with a

hand on fire with jewels—" Do I call upon the country to pay for my household?"

During this speech Richard had been wriggling restlessly in his chair, struggling with his emotions. His blind fury at his uncle's words was to some extent restrained by the respect he had felt all his life for that same uncle. He could not believe the things that he was hearing. But as John plainly expected an answer, some answer must be given. " N-no," he said at last, almost meekly.

" Very well, then," resumed John, settling himself more comfortably, " you must try to live according to your means. Oh, I don't blame you, my dear boy," he added kindly; " it's not your fault. But we must investigate your accounts and see where we can economise. I am sure you, madam " —he bowed to the Princess—" will agree with me."

The Princess returned his bow, stiffly. She did not agree at all, but dared not say so. Richard, looking despairingly at her for support, was too young to read any hostility in her face, but he noticed that Sir Hugh Segrave, who was standing behind John of Gaunt, looked very black, and whispered something in the ear of Sir Aubrey de Vere. Meanwhile the boys of the household, John Fitzalan, the Hollands, John Montague and Robert de Vere, stood about gloomily, conscious that they formed a large part of the unnecessary expenses. Only Henry of Derby seemed pleased. John of Gaunt lay back in his chair, and looked at them all most meaningly.

"Perhaps you will excuse me, uncle," said Richard suddenly, with great dignity. "Come, Robert, I want you."

He stalked out of the room, followed by Robert, whose arm he took immediately they were out of sight, and led him into his bedroom. There he burst into a paroxysm of rage against John of Gaunt. The household expenditure should *not* be checked; a King *must* live according to his rank; his uncles were *always* trying to belittle his dignity and to make out that he was nobody; one day he would *kill* John of Gaunt; but what did Robert think of it? did he agree that a King must live of his own?

"Good lord, no," said Robert. He stood against the window looking serenely down upon Richard, who stopped flinging himself about the room at the sound of his cool, lazy voice. "It's quite obvious that he wants money for his own concerns and he's going to get it by cutting down your expenses."

Richard was horror-struck. "Robert, are you sure? What are his own concerns?"

"The crown of Spain obviously. That's why he talks about a very necessary war. It gives him an excellent excuse to go to Spain, as it's a sound policy to attack France from the rear as it were. I must say I held my breath when you started the subject. He's going to push the French war for all he's worth. But anyway the Castilians are all schismatics, so he can pretend he's leading a crusade if he wants an excuse."

"But if anybody leads a crusade, I do," said Richard stiffly.

"I shouldn't if I were you," Robert returned casually. "You're well out of it. Think what a farce Thomas of Woodstock has made of it already. It's no good, Richard, we haven't got the money for anything big, and it's better not to hide all our petty little reasons for war under the cant of a crusade. Who cares what Pope is on the throne as long as he leaves us in peace? All this hypocrisy and conventional piety makes me feel quite sick. And think of the money wasted on keeping up castles in France which nobody wants, and on preventing their ships in the Channel from looting our merchantmen. And what a country to make war on! Nobody can beat a Frenchman for jewellery and enamel work, or for miniature painting for the matter of that. And their songs and poetry! Where would you and I be without the *Roman de la Rose?* And yet the English army, like a whole lot of vandals want to go crashing into this Garden of Eden, and turn it into a heap of charred ruins." He was still leaning against the window, delivering this speech with a slow bored drawl which had all the more effect upon Richard. "What you ought to do," he continued, looking out of the window, more aloof and indifferent than ever, "is to give up this nonsense about a crusade, and as soon as you're able to, to make a lasting peace." He carefully removed a long brown hair that had somehow got on to his sleeve, and twisted it round

his fingers. "But of course you won't," he said, bending very low over the hair and frowning at it; "it's not worth the fuss. Too many people interested." And he looked round at Richard and laughed.

The King refused to dine in Hall that evening in spite of the honour due to the Duke of Lancaster. Instead, he remained in his own room, brooding upon the ruins of his illusions. He saw himself as a poor silly boy duped by the flatteries of the Archbishop of Ravenna, playing into the hands of John of Gaunt, the laughing stock of even his own friends. How Robert, for instance, must despise him. But they would see, soon they would all see, that the King was someone to be reckoned with, and that one day John of Gaunt would not be able to browbeat him into dismissing his servants to swell the Lancaster inheritance. . . . Meanwhile, where was God, and where were the eleven angels? Did He also not care, like Robert, what Pope ruled over Holy Church? But the gay world from which Robert came thought nothing at all of God. Nor did John of Gaunt. Yet he himself, floundering though he was in the depths of despair, sick at heart with the Church that was trying to enslave him, felt that somewhere beyond the darkness of his own doubts, there yet remained a God and a Holy Virgin who hated war and loved beauty. To them he swore that he would never fight the French.

IV

Nevertheless John of Gaunt had it all his own way at the council he summoned at Reading to discuss the problems raised by the Peasants' Revolt. He swept away all protestations raised by John Fordham, Keeper of the Privy Seal, whom Richard had persuaded to plead his cause. There was not one dissentient voice when the Duke laid before the council his plan for taking an army into Spain. And the King's household was to be cut down: among those dismissed should be the friar Thomas Rushook. Everybody knew why, but nobody dared protest. John had a wonderful way of assuming that everything he suggested was the only thing to do: he half apologised for stating the obvious. Richard, sitting sulkily in his chair, knew that he could do nothing; that all his plans for opposing him melted away when he was actually in front of him, and he smiling in his own peculiar way and being so perfectly and so hatefully himself.

When the King came back to Westminster for the November parliament, his altar-piece was ready for him. Nicholas Cheriton had special permission to carry it up to the Palace.

Richard toyed with the folding panels indifferently. So many things had happened since he had sat for that picture that he had almost forgotten about it. He looked up at the monk before he

opened it, and said rather peevishly: "Must I have a picture of myself perpetually in front of me?"

Nicholas smiled. "You needn't if you don't want to, sire," he said, in matter-of-fact tones; "you can burn it if you like. It's yours."

Richard rubbed his fingers restlessly along the wood. It was not of course the thought of the portrait of himself that filled him with such repugnance, but of all that the picture stood for—the crusade, the boy-king offered by the saints to the Queen of Heaven as the saviour of Holy Church. It seemed nothing but mockery to him now, and a reminder of his past foolishness. He continued to toy with the panel, still almost afraid to open it, and glanced down at it reluctantly. But suddenly his whole attitude changed. Nicholas Cheriton, watching him anxiously, gave a great sigh of relief. "One minute," said Richard and hurried to the window for better light. There he examined the panel most intently.

He was looking at his own white hart crouched in the familiar attitude, with its forelegs doubled under it, and the royal crown round its neck. That was what he expected to see; that was what the monk had been asked to paint. But he was looking, too, into a pair of soft shining eyes alive—almost quivering—with some strange secret emotion; he could not tell whether it was joy or sorrow. And the expression was not only in the eyes, but in the whole pose of the figure, in the curve of the right foreleg and the curl of the

WILTON DIPTYCH (Left Panel)

*National Gallery*

branched antlers. And although the hart was in the same position as all the rest which were painted on his shield, stamped on his silver, or embroidered on his clothes, it lay on the varnished wood he held in his hands with a perfect grace and individuality all its own.

Silently Richard handed it to the Earl of Oxford, who was as usual beside him. No words were necessary. But Robert of course broke into ecstasies. "There's something rather like you about it," he added, and turned to the artist. "Was that intentional?"

Nicholas's rather incoherent reply was lost in Richard's self-conscious laughter. He was now completely restored to good humour. "Now for the picture!" he almost shouted, and his face was red with excitement. He and Robert bent over it together.

## CHAPTER III

### I

Ann was only too glad to get away from Bohemia. It had not been the same since her father's death, for the court had been civilised in his time, but her brother had turned the whole Palace into a bawdy-house. She thought of the gorgeous clothes, the magnificent paintings, the brilliantly illuminated books that her father had loved and taught her to love also, and then of Wenzel surrounded by drunken young men, tipping wine-cups over the fine linen tablecloths, slashing at the tapestries with his dagger, kissing maidservants and insulting her women friends. "This animal," she had said disdainfully to her little brother Sigismund, "is the most high and mighty Emperor of God's Empire."

Ann had withdrawn from the court to her castle in the mountains, and had taken Sigismund with her. She had resolved to educate him along the proper paths of wisdom and virtue. He was a nice little boy now, but his brain was unfortunately not so quick as her own, and books bored him, though he liked the illustrations. When her marriage was first mooted, she had been sorry to leave Sigismund to the tender mercies of the Bohemian court. But now she was not sorry, for she had realised that he

would always be like that—dull, placid, and comparatively incorruptible — and there was now nothing left in Bohemia to live for.

So she was to go to England and be a queen. A kindly Englishman, Sir Simon Burley, had told her how charming her future husband was: nothing could surpass his beauty and intelligence, his love for all that was refined and cultured. He led her to suppose that nothing could be more violently opposed to Wenzel's way of life than the habits of the English court under Richard the Second. She had heard from other sources that he had a strong will and a bad temper, but this only excited her interest in him. All the best people had strong wills and bad tempers. She felt really angry and disgusted when the news came of the revolt in England and at the consequent delay in her marriage negotiations.

It was a very cold day in January when she eventually set foot in England for the first time. Crossing the Channel had been difficult because of French hostility: she had had to wait a month at Calais before they said the seas were safe. She was so cold she would not come up on deck and look at the cliffs sparkling in the frosty sunlight, which would have been her first view of England. Some of her ladies went, however; Agnes Launcekron skipped merrily up the ladder, and waved her little fur-clad hand first at England and then at France. But as they neared Dover the Princess could no longer keep below; but the cold air stung her eyes

so fiercely that it was through tears that she gazed at the white cliffs and rolling downs, and the Castle jutting out stubbornly from their embrace.

"I always thought England was flat," said Agnes, close to her ear.

"So it is," an elder woman assured them; "only here we're so low down to start with."

But it was not flat: it was round and sturdy, and full of humps, its lines blurred and indistinct in the thick frosty air. Ann loved it.

They stayed the night at the Castle before making the long journey down to London. Thomas, Earl of Buckingham, the King's youngest uncle, acted as host; he had come up from Pleshy the day before, and the coldness of the weather had not helped him to regard his new Queen with favour.

Ann never forgot her first sight of Thomas of Woodstock. She studied him with particular attention, not because she guessed that he was going to play the villain's part in her new life, but because he was the first member of the English royal family she saw. She was to become very familiar with that very fair skin and deep-set eyes—all the family were alike in that—but the Earl of Buckingham alone of the sons of Edward III had inherited his mother's squarer, plumper Flemish face and small thin-lipped mouth. If this were considered good-looking, she did not care much for it, and caught herself hoping that Richard did not take after this particular uncle. He treated her rather

condescendingly, she thought, and she wondered if the rumour were true that he was jealous of his nephew's position. Or was it that in England people of fourteen were still considered to be children? She began to wonder as she listened politely to his conversation at dinner, what Richard would be like in twenty years time, whether she could bear being married to him when he had grown a beard and it got in the way when he ate. She herself could eat nothing on her first evening in England; she felt tired and dispirited, and her first introduction to her new family filled her with forebodings.

The weather changed during the night, and the sky looked stormy and unsettled as the party rode out of Dover to London. Ann in her covered carriage was sheltered from the snow which began to fall towards afternoon, but she was so jolted and shaken that she would rather have been on horseback. She slept a little, but only to dream that everybody in England had a face like Thomas of Woodstock, and she was quite glad to wake up again and find that Agnes at least had not changed.

## II

While the marriage service went on, she could not help forgetting what was happening and looking round the church. She stared at the gay riot of colours on the wall above the row of angels, and

made out with some difficulty that they represented the story of Job. She was too loyal to suppose for one instant that they surpassed the new paintings in the cathedral at Prague, but she liked looking at them nevertheless. Then as she and her husband stood at the altar together, she suddenly caught sight of a picture between the candles, of angels radiantly blue, standing as it seemed, in a circle of blue-tipped flames. She was so interested in it that Richard had to pull her hand hard to get the ring on it. The pull jerked her back into a consciousness of where she was.

While the Archbishop was giving his address, she let her eyes stray back again to the picture. She then realized that what she thought had been flames were the points of the angels' wings, and they were standing round the Holy Mother and Child. In the other half of the picture were three saints pointing at a kneeling boy and looking towards the Virgin. Two of them wore crowns, and the boy himself was also wearing a crown. . . .

But Richard was pulling at her again, pulling her arm through his, and for the first time she became conscious that the body she was touching was that of her husband, and for the first time she felt married to that husband. She did not look at him —that would have been undignified she thought— but she liked the feel of his taut indifferent young arm. She realised with a sort of amusement that the service itself had meant nothing to either of them, but while the thought uppermost in his mind

was that it should go without a hitch, she had almost forgotten she was taking part in it. Then she was swept away down the aisle on his arm, away from the altar, away from the Sacred Host, but the pale-faced Virgin and her eleven angels came with her, haunting her at the banquet with the glory of their radiant blue and gold. . . She longed to ask Richard about them sometime when she knew him better.

When she did ask him she had known him just a week, and had known a very serious and grown-up Richard, rather self-conscious and extremely royal. She didn't care for this, especially as she knew he unbent in the company of the Earl of Oxford and other young men. When she sat dully indoors with her women she could hear them all clattering into the courtyard after hunting, shouting and laughing in a manner scarcely royal.

Sir Simon Burley had been perfectly right when he said that there was a difference between Richard's court and Wenzel's. She perceived that the English courtiers, instead of flattering and bringing forward their sovereign, treated him rather as an attractive but wholly incompetent baby, who must be kept amused while they did his work for him. The tone had been set by his uncles, but the men who carried on the government, in spite of being their bitterest enemies, found it a good policy and kept it up. He was surrounded by boys of his own age, and it was gently suggested to him that the usual thing for a King to do was to have a good

time. She didn't know whether Richard ever wanted to do anything more than hunt or dance or read poetry, but she had heard stories since she came to England of the way he had handled the rebellious peasants last June, and his energy then had seemed untiring. Blanche Worth, one of her English ladies-in-waiting, told her that the Princess of Wales at first unconsciously fell in with this manner of treating the King—she seemed unable to believe that he was ever going to grow up; but after he had shown some initiative at last, her attitude completely changed. So much so, indeed, that the government, headed this time by the Duke of Lancaster, had realised its power was going. At the last parliament, therefore, anybody who encouraged the King to do his duty had been sent away from Court, and in view of his marriage an allowance for a separate household had been granted to the Princess.

She couldn't help being rather amused to notice that Richard himself was perfectly sure he was grown up. He generally ignored the boys he was expected to consort with, alluding to them as children, and preferred the society of young men like John Worth, John Montague, or Robert de Vere. These were certainly very different from Wenzel's boon companions: she was not sure whether she altogether approved of them, for she liked men to look like men and not like strange wispy shadows moving vacantly about the palace with books of poetry in their limp inconsequent hands. But she

couldn't help enjoying Robert's company, because he was so very amusing, and she liked looking at his pale delicately cut face, and the way his eyelashes curled over his cheek—although she knew quite well that he brushed them out every morning with a brush dipped in dye. And soon she became quite fond of John Montague, who, in spite of being rather less extravagant than the others in his dress and conversation, yet seemed to her to be the only genuine artist.

But Richard himself was not pale. His cheeks were full of colour and his eyes, though not a very bright blue—in fact they looked grey in some lights—were brilliant with life and gaiety. Ann thought he had a very sensitive, expressive face: never, she felt, would he be an adept at concealing his feelings. His cream-white skin fascinated her, for she was not accustomed to such fairness, and she could never cease to marvel at his hair. It was not the flaxen yellow of the sons of Edward III, but the rich deep colour, like burnished gold, which had—though she didn't know it—brought the Black Prince to his knees before the Fair Maid of Kent. Now Princess Joan's hair had lost its gloss and you could hardly recognise it as the same colour as her son's.

It happened quite naturally after all. The altar-piece, although placed in St. Stephen's Chapel for the marriage ceremony, was really kept in the King's private chapel and travelled to Windsor with them. She always used to look at it after she

had finished her evening prayers, and once Richard caught her standing there staring.

"Do you like it?" he asked with an odd shy smile.

She could have said a lot about it, but she only observed that he might have worn a gold chain or something round his neck.

He laughed.

"Is that all you've got to say about my picture? But it's lovely, isn't it? Can your Bohemians paint like that?"

"No," Ann answered promptly. "They could never paint a portrait so that you could recognise who it's meant to be. But what are they all doing, and why are they all looking at the banner?"

Then Richard found himself telling this matter-of-fact little person the whole story of the diptych: how Cardinal Pileo had planned it to get him interested in the French war, but that since then he had seen through the Cardinal's wiles and had realised that there wasn't much crusade about leading a lot of Vandals to destroy the art of France. (When telling Ann, he gave himself the credit of that perception.) He told her, too, how John of Gaunt had gone off with nearly £60,000 in his purse to raise an army to take to Spain, and that to pay for it he, Richard, had had half his knights sent away from the Court. He told her that he would not rest (although he had certainly rested some months) until he saw England firmly bound to France with the chains of a lasting peace. (That metaphor at least was his own.)

WILTON DIPTYCH (Right Panel)

*National Gallery*

Then they gravely discussed how the thing could be done. It did not occur to either of them that the alliance between good Papalists against schismatics was the very means by which they had become husband and wife. It only troubled them that Charles of France had been brought up to consider the King of England as his lawful enemy, and the very fact that he had failed to win Ann as his wife would make matters more difficult. Apropos of this, Ann suddenly broke away from the discussion to say: "Did I ever show you the collar he sent me as a prospective husband? You would like it. It's beautifully made."

She crossed the room, unlocked a chest and took out of it a little silver box. Inside the box was a gold chain about three inches broad, the links made in the form of golden broomscods, and an enamel flower set between each.

"I wonder why he has chosen the broom plant for his badge," said Richard, looking at it critically, and comparing it unfavourably with his own White Hart. But Ann took it out of his hands and fastened it round his neck.

"There," she said, regarding him with her head on one side. "You wear that till you've succeeded in making peace with Charles of France."

Later, when they were both in bed, Ann sat up suddenly, laughing. "I've thought of an idea—it would make the Cardinal furious if he knew." Then, as Richard would not ask her what it was,

she could wait no longer, and broke out: "Get your monk to paint my collar round your neck in that picture. I said you ought to have something in the way of a chain. Richard!" She bent over him still laughing, and touched the shoulder that was ungraciously presented to her when Richard slept. "Have broomscod collars on every one of your angels; then it would show that Our Lady was working for peace. And whenever you looked at it you would remember that Charles of France is your friend and not your enemy, and that nothing will ever divide you."

"And broomscods round my White Hart," he murmured drowsily. "Encircling it for eternity. Yes, I will."

## CHAPTER IV

### I

THE five years which changed Richard from a boy to a man were, he often thought afterwards, the happiest years of his life. The very consciousness of growing was itself an exhilarating pleasure, bringing with it as it did a consciousness of power. He began to realize that men could be afraid of him, and that he was somehow different from the people that surrounded him, not because he was the King, but because he was himself. Sometimes he couldn't help being frightfully pleased that he was not anybody else, and really rather sorry for all the people who were not this marvellous exciting thing that was he. But sometimes again when he looked in his glass he was seized with an awful terror because it was Richard the Second of England looking back at him and he could never get away from it. Nobody else in the world had ever been Richard the Second of England; only he alone among men in awful isolation was himself. He did not wonder why they were afraid of him when he was so terrified of himself, but he did wonder why in the past few years they had all changed in their attitude towards him.

For he hadn't changed a bit. He had grown, but

he hadn't changed. What had happened was that in his childhood he had almost unconsciously arranged his companions into those whom he felt were his inferiors and those whom he felt were not. The first class were much more numerous than the second: in fact, as far as he could remember, looking back, the only boy he felt was his superior was Robert, Earl of Oxford. But on the other hand, a typical example of the first class was Henry of Derby, his cousin and John of Gaunt's son—that hatefully bright and efficient person who deserved all he got at the hands of himself and Robert. Never did he despise anybody more than the hearty competent well-meaning young Philistine who was Henry of Derby. Now he had grown older, the whole world—even grown-up people—had turned into so many Henries of Derby. Those who were not Henries were Roberts—and there were very few of them.

Women of course were different. He did not feel like either of his two selves in the presence of his mother, who made him very shy, and generally say the most singular things. He had a horrid feeling of wanting to run away from his mother, because he so hated the person he became when she was there.

Then there was Ann. Ann was perfect. He had never felt any passionate love for her, but he liked being with her and holding her little cosy body in his arms. And she had an attractive habit of murmuring odd, unexpected and amusing things

out of the side of her mouth, which were generally very much to the point.

He often talked to Ann about religion, and he found that she, too, like his mother, was interested in translations of the Bible. She said she thought people ought to read it a great deal more than they did. But she was no Lollard: John Montague and she would have endless discussions about the wealth of the clergy and what was due to the Pope—at least he did the talking and she listened, tacitly disagreeing. Richard himself tried to define his own feelings, but he never could express in words the paradoxical position he was in—that of combining a hearty contempt for the Church with a violent love for its doctrines and services—and he did not feel that either John or Ann could ever quite understand it.

Finally of course there was Robert. One reason for his liking those five years was that in the course of them he had grown up to Robert and no longer felt inferior. By some strange miracle they seemed exactly the same age, and both would rather be in each other's company than anywhere else on earth.

Robert was always appearing in the most amazing clothes. He was the first man in England to wear shoes with such long toes that you had to chain them up to the knee. All the court wildly bought shoes like them, and even Richard's uncles, after holding off in extreme disdain until they were almost out of fashion, eventually bought them too. Robert was also very fastidious in his habits, and

the older generation thought him effeminate because he was never without a handkerchief or a toothpick.

Richard thought that nobody, not even Geoffrey Chaucer, could write little songs and roundels like Robert, and he made up queer little grotesque tunes on his flute, which he said expressed his moods. It was as if he were blowing exquisite little rainbow-coloured bubbles out of soapy water, which rose magnificently into the air and then suddenly broke into nothing.

It was a marvellous world that was spreading in front of Richard if only he might be left to enjoy it. He could read stories heavy with the weight of exotic Greek-sounding names, out of books glistening with gold, and exquisitely illustrated with tiny miniature paintings; he could listen to fragments of song about May, violets, nightingales and love; he could dress himself in clothes of wonderful colours; watch his own hands pushing out of long silken sleeves like flowers bursting from a sheaf of green, and feel the delicate silk clinging to his body or brushing the floor at his feet. He could linger for hours over the ordinary ceremony of washing his hands, wondering in a kind of shocked amazement how other people could wash theirs so quickly and never notice the glint of the silver basin, never feel any of his thrill at the hot water pouring over their fingers. "Other people have more consideration for their pages," his mother had once told him sharply when he was a very little boy. But Ann,

very soon after her arrival in England, had watched him whirling the water round and round, and spreading his hands at the bottom of the basin to survey their distorted appearance. He looked up suddenly and saw her laughing, then catch the water in her own basin and flip it through her fingers. He asked for little more than to have Ann always beside him, liking the same kind of things as he did, and noticing that he liked them.

It was all a question really of how you spent your money. Some people liked to spend it in being uncomfortable and shedding blood, or keeping up useless castles in France, so that Englishmen could say "This is ours." He preferred to spend it on beautiful things, but then they all said that he was being extravagant and wasting the country's money. It was useless to retort, as he frequently did, that he was showing them what was worth having, and encouraging English workmen to produce something better than armour and lances. And he was powerless since they had in their hands the excellent weapon forged by John of Gaunt—that of publicly denouncing the extravagance of the court whenever they wanted money. The worst offender in this respect was Richard, Earl of Arundel, who had once so irritated the King at the parliament which met at Salisbury, by giving a grossly exaggerated report of the household expenditure, that he had burst out furiously, "It's a damned lie!"

His mother had early impressed upon him the fact that he must never quarrel with John of Gaunt,

for the simple reason that he would share the fate of his great-grandfather if he did. The Lancaster wealth had been too much for Edward II, and John of Gaunt had inherited a good deal more besides.

Princess Joan implored him, after the episode at Salisbury, to keep on good terms with the nobles as well, as the old King had done so successfully, especially since the Earl of Arundel understood as nobody else how to manage the Commons. "It's far more difficult for you to stay on your throne than ever it was for your grandfather," she told him; "even though you didn't succeed a father who had been deposed. In the old days traitors could only use brute strength, but since that disgraceful parliament people call "the good," the Commons have got so above themselves that they're enquiring into all sorts of things that aren't their business. And all that the enemies of law and order have got to do is to encourage them, and to tell them lies."

But Richard, because he was shy of his mother, wouldn't listen; he pretended he wasn't interested; and she left him unhappily, wondering what was in his strange wayward mind.

Yet he had honestly tried to avoid quarrelling with his uncle of Lancaster. He was certainly an easy person to get on with: his charming manner disarmed Richard every time he saw him, and though he hated him in theory, he couldn't help finding him very attractive in the flesh. In fact he was almost beginning to regard his uncle with some affection until the awful incident of the Carmelite

friar threw him into such a fever of disgust and suspicion that he swore he would never see John of Gaunt again.

It was during that same unfortunate parliament at Salisbury, while the Court was still at Clarendon and he had been hearing Mass in Robert's private oratory. Afterwards the friar who had celebrated it (his name was John Latimer) had asked to speak to Richard, and had told him that the Duke of Lancaster was planning his murder. Robert had been very sensible about it, and when he himself was dancing about in a passion—even seizing his hat and shoes and hurling them out of the window—Robert had called the guards and put the friar under arrest. He had been so hysterical in his rage that he never realised what was going on until Robert hit him violently on the face with his glove and told him not to behave like a fool. This brought him to his senses, and he could listen calmly to Robert's theory that the friar was probably mad or a liar, safest under arrest. Afterwards he thought how surprising it was that there should be so much energy and practical good sense in Robert. But what altered his entire attitude to John of Gaunt, and a good many others—people of his own household whom he thought he could trust—was that later the friar was captured on his way to the castle where he was to be imprisoned while the case was investigated, and so foully tortured that he died. The thought of it made Richard feel quite sick, and he couldn't understand how anyone with any pre-

tence of being civilised could have done it. But some of the men had had their orders from John of Gaunt.

After that Richard didn't feel he cared how much money John squeezed out of the Commons, or how many campaigns he conducted in France or Spain, as long as he was safely out of England. But when he did leave for Spain in the summer of '86, things were going so badly for Richard that it might have been better if he had stayed at home.

It was also a great shock to Richard to discover that his half-brother, John Holland, had been involved in the abduction of the friar, for no particular motive except the thirst for excitement. People said that John had stood by, himself, while the torture went on, and though he declared that it was only out of loyalty to the King that he had been so anxious to find out who had put the fellow up to it, Richard was not appeased. Apart from the lawlessness of snatching the prisoner from the King's protection, the real crime he had committed in Richard's eyes was to contemplate hurting somebody and watching him writhe. That was why the next year he would show no mercy to John when he killed young Ralph Stafford in a brawl (he said it was by accident) even though his mother pleaded for him on her knees. It hurt him terribly to think that he and John Holland were born of the same mother. But the death of that mother so soon afterwards softened him, and though she never saw the reconciliation she prayed for, for her sake he

received his brother again into the household.

Yes, they were stormy years, but they were full of excitement and exhilaration. The challenge had been flung to the war party; it had become clear that the King was in favour of peace. Moreover, he was beginning to see how it might be done—how he could beat the nobles on their own ground; for at present those who had more lands than he had could have everything their own way. But it occurred quite suddenly to him when he was brooding over the necessity of keeping in with John of Gaunt, that instead of grovelling to his uncles because they were rich, he might build up more riches for the Crown and make them grovel to him. For instance there was Ireland. Nobody had ever been able to make Ireland yield anything to the Exchequer, but he didn't see why he shouldn't make some attempt to get something out of it, especially since the English there were asking him to send out a lieutenant whom he could trust. There was nobody in the world he could trust of sufficient rank for the office Lionel of Clarence had once filled, except Robert de Vere, Earl of Oxford. He had become tremendously excited at the thought of heaping new honours on Robert. Marquis was the title given to the lords who held the march lands of Wales for the King, and marquis therefore should Robert be styled in future. But it wasn't going to be a mere name: he would adopt the German practice of regarding it as a special title of honour, and Robert should sit in Parliament above the other earls—above even

Thomas of Woodstock and Edmund of Langley, the sons of Edward III.

His council were delighted with the idea of raising revenue in Ireland if it could be done—and they thought it might if a few competent knights and clerks were sent over as stewards of the earl's new estates—but they suggested that the idea of creating a new significance to the word marquis would only lead to further trouble. Moreover, Robert would want money and men, which would be difficult to raise. Sir Michael de la Pole put forward the proposal of granting him the income of one of the royal manors to meet his present needs, which loss would be amply made up to the King by the flow of new wealth from Ireland. Queensborough was the manor chosen, and Richard added with his own hand to the signet letter which ordered its transference: "The curse of God and St. Edward and the King on any who do or attempt aught against this writ." That was in March, 1385.

But he was bent too on making Robert a marquis. It was Ann who suggested that this could only be done if the royal princes were made dukes. "Otherwise," she said in her sensible way, "it will be more trouble than it's worth." So Thomas of Woodstock became, to his great surprise, Duke of Gloucester, and Edmund of Langley Duke of York; and when they had taken their places above the earls, Michael de la Pole (himself raised now to the earldom of Suffolk) declared in full parliament that because

of the Earl of Oxford's special services and loyalty to the King, he was to be created Marquis of Dublin—a title he explained which was in future to be considered as superior to that of an earl.

It had been great fun that day in parliament when Robert knelt at his feet to receive his title (they had both been so exquisitely solemn about it and had not dared to meet each other's eyes) and then afterwards seated himself between the Earl of Arundel and the Duke of York. Richard could hardly control his laughter when he saw the Duke collect the skirts of his houpelande and draw away with a shudder of disgust, and the Earl threw Robert from his humbler seat a look of utter hatred. Robert himself smiled broadly when he had taken his seat, and even looked up at his sovereign with something very like a wink.

It was scenes like that which had made those years so glorious to live and so throbbingly lovely to look back on, when times had changed and there was no Robert and no Ann.

## II

"What am I to make of this?" Richard was heard to ask in some despair. He was turning the pages of a stout little book bound in velvet and smelling of gold paint. "In a rash moment I asked John Gower to write me a poem about love, and just listen to it.

*'For Love is blind and cannot know*
*Where he is going, till he falls;*
*Therefore, unless it so befalls*
*That he with wise counsel is led,*
*He ought indeed to be in dread,*
*For counsel is above all things*
*To those that purpose to be Kings.*
*Now it is full time to withdraw*
*And put your heart under the law*
*That by reason is governed*
*And not by will.'*

There's pages and pages more."

"No, how too marvellous, is there?" "Do go on." "This is the kind of thing I really want to know about."

So Richard's friends, shouting with laughter, received the *Confessio Amantis*.

"This is what he has to say about the exquisite story of Medusa:

*'Lo, now my son, take warning, here,*
*That you your sight do not misuse.*
*Cast not your eyes upon Meduse,*
*Lest you be turned into stone.'*

Why in the world are these people allowed to go about?"

"Henry of Derby would enjoy that," observed John Worth, looking up from the game of chess he

was playing with Thomas Clifford. "I heard him lecturing Robert the other day on his behaviour at the Windsor tournament. Said he wouldn't have spoken, only it wasn't fair on the girl."

Everybody looked at Robert seated at the window, a writing-tablet in his hand and an expression of idiotic rapture on his face, superbly indifferent to anything but his own song-making.

Richard read on, moaning faintly as he did so, and calling reverently upon St. Edward to defend him against such confessors and such lovers. "And I am the begetter," he murmured, stricken. "What on earth made me ask him to do it, do you remember, Robert?"

Then Robert roused himself. "You were trying to be funny, I believe," he said; "but it was not one of your best attempts."

"I think I shall make him cut out all this dedication. I might suggest that Henry would be a better patron. Poor Henry! Perhaps it would be going rather too far to couple his name with such a preposterous piece of work. Much as I dislike him, I really must draw the line somewhere." He leapt suddenly from his chair and stood over Robert, looking over his shoulder as he wrote. Here was something which was really alive, something you could really believe was Love. He stood there silently for an instant, rejoicing in the difference between Robert de Vere and John Gower, then impatiently, to hide the joy that swept over him: "For the Lord's sake, stop writing ballades to

Agnes and listen to something far more important. The Queen has asked us to have a quiet little dinner with her in her rooms, as it's such a wet day and we're all so depressed. I accepted for you as well as for myself."

They went out together, the King's arm round Robert's shoulders. It was pleasant, this thought of dining quietly with no fuss and ceremony, no entertaining of people you never wanted to see again, no buzz and clatter of knights and squires at the tables below. Ann always suggested it on the right days. The only other guest was Agnes Launcekron.

Richard was never sure whether he liked Agnes or hated her. He admitted that she sang divinely, and her dancing was superb, but he found her a little overwhelming, and he thought she had too much to say. Robert always said that quiet, modest-looking girls were hypocrites (that was certainly true of his own wife Philippa), and that the society that expected its women to be gentle and unassuming was really bullying them into being completely affected. But Ann wasn't affected; and certainly Agnes was tiring to live up to.

She was speaking now, her strange husky voice cutting across Robert's absurd treble and Ann's soft little accompaniment. (Why did Ann's voice always remind him of bare feet pattering along paving-stones?) "I can't think why people always say that this generation is so depraved. The modern girl with her plucked eyebrows and shaven neck.

Though why you should be immoral because you dislike seeing a lot of hair about in inconvenient places is more than I can understand."

"Of course, the trouble with us is that we're over-civilised," Robert observed, lifting a piece of heron's breast out of a sea of gravy very delicately with his fingers. "And I don't see how we can survive much longer. We have all the virtues and all the weaknesses of the Augustan age."

And he threw the breastbone under the table.

Richard noticed that he always talked like that in the presence of Agnes Launcekron. But it was true what he said; it seemed odd that you couldn't be really civilised without being decadent, but there really did seem to be something morally wrong with a society that could produce such a magnificent piece of work as Robert. He somehow felt—and could think out no reason for it—that when the world was full of beauty and magnificence in every form, it must be running headlong to its ruin.

After dinner, Ann drew him aside and told him he was to be tactful, and to let Robert and Agnes enjoy this rare opportunity of being together out of the eye of gossips, who would report their doings to Philippa. Ann was of a romantic turn of mind, and saw no harm in throwing lovers together as long as their relations remained honourable.

"I wonder what it feels like to be in love," said Richard paternally, seating himself beside her as she bent over her embroidery. This amused her, and she looked up to laugh at him.

"Poor Richard," she said; "you've never had the chance to find out."

He waved his hand deprecatingly. "But you know what I mean, don't you? We don't either of us feel for each other what you're supposed to feel according to the poets. Do you feel as if you're caught in a snare or that you've been shot by an arrow?"

"Not a bit. But do they? Does anybody?"

"Robert's rather moody sometimes and tries to talk like Troilus. And says it's more torture than happiness to him to look on Agnes and not be able to have her. I'm glad I'm not in love with you, Ann. It's much better to be as we are."

"I think ours is the best kind of love," Ann brought out fiercely. But he shook his head, thinking of Robert's songs. "Not love." Then he thought how much he liked being with her, and looking at her, saw that her head had drooped, and her needle was diving savagely into the linen. "Oh, Ann," he pleaded; "the very best kind of companionship." And then was beginning to apologize for the hideous barren word.

But she, doubling her chin, so low did she bend over her work, said casually: "As you feel for Robert?"

He jumped. It wasn't the least how he felt for Robert. He was surprised to find how utterly different it was. He didn't think always of Ann, think how amusing she would find certain incidents that happened to him, or imagine what she would

say when she heard them. Hearing her speak, watching her movements, did not fill him with a strange hot excitement. But he said thoughtfully and deliberately: "Yes. Very much as I feel for Robert."

Eventually he could bear it no longer, and called out to Robert, who was standing at the window with Agnes. "You know we really ought to think about this next parliament," he said, a little reproachfully. Robert, without a trace of annoyance, was immediately at his side.

"What's happening? Anything really sensational?" Ann inquired.

"This war question, of course. It's coming up again after the panic in July. Michael thinks I ought to go off to France to redeem our honour. I don't think I really could."

"Why does he think so?" Ann asked. "I thought he was all against the war."

"He thinks it will make everybody pleasanter. Personally, I think it will only make them worse. Anyway, I'm not going, but I don't mind his giving it out publicly that I am. It might give us a little money to pay our hard-worked clerks."

Robert was still waiting to be consulted, but now he was here there seemed to be nothing to say. Agnes hung about sadly at the window, hoping he would soon be able to join her, but the Queen came instead. She put her arm round Agnes and kissed her.

"Are you happy?" she asked.

"Oh, terribly," Agnes answered, and blushed.

"You don't feel as though you were caught in a snare or shot by an arrow?"

"Well, sometimes," Agnes confessed, laughing. "At least, sometimes it hurts rather. But I like it to. And everything seems to have become quite new and lovely, as if you were looking at it through coloured glass."

Ann wondered if she could love Richard or not. The world seemed just the same colour to her.

## CHAPTER V

### I

On September 10th, 1386, a large and splendid cavalcade was proceeding along the flat road which runs inland from Ford Manor to Arundel Castle. It was raining finely but soakingly, so that the mud cottages of Ford looked bedraggled and dark, and the castle loomed up above the road in a moist silver mist. The outriders looked dispirited, the horses weary, and the carriage in the middle of the procession was thick with mud. Nevertheless, it was a very grand cavalcade bearing the ducal arms of Thomas of Woodstock, a prince of the royal blood.

Inside the carriage lay in some discomfort the two daughters of Humphrey de Bohun, who now, by their marriages into the royal family, had become also aunt and niece. Though thus doubly bound together, the two ladies did not bear each other any particular affection; in fact, their habitual distaste for one another's company was increased at present by their uncomfortable positions. They disliked each other and disliked their husbands: the Countess of Derby was jealous because of her sister's precedence over her at court, and the Duchess of Gloucester was jealous because the

Countess had married the heir to the fortune of Lancaster.

The two husbands also sat in the carriage talking seriously. They were on very friendly terms and affected not to notice the ill tempers of their wives. Nor did the bumping and swinging of the carriage check the ardour with which they discussed their plans.

It was nearly four o'clock when the procession at last turned into the glistening courtyard of the castle, and the carriage disgorged its cramped and discordant occupants. The huge fire in the hall, and the sounds and smell of supper, the ecstasies of Lady Arundel at their charmingly serviceable travelling dresses, all combined to put the ladies into a better humour; but even though they made an effort to be pleasant when they appeared in the hall for supper, the men who were not their husbands could not help wondering whether it was altogether an unmixed pleasure to marry an heiress.

Present at the table were all the prime movers of the war party. There was the host, the Earl of Arundel, a popular hero indeed, with a picturesquely rugged face and a massive chest. There was his brother the bishop, who had all the brains of the family and indeed of the whole party, a delicate-looking man with the features of the earl, but while in the one those features seemed hewn out of rock, in the other they seemed carved in ivory. Then there was Thomas, Earl of Warwick, inclined to stoutness: his face was weaker than the rest and

showed signs of bodily indulgences; opposite him sat the young Earl of Nottingham, a sulky-looking boy who had married Arundel's daughter. Finally there were present the two members of the royal family, Thomas of Gloucester and Henry of Derby, more zealous than anyone to wreck the schemes of their kinsman King Richard. Between them sat the women: the young Countess of Arundel trying very hard to understand, the Bohun sisters sullen and bored with the whole proceeding, and Lady Warwick intelligent but anxious.

"The French King has absolutely played into our hands by his attempt to invade us," the bishop was saying. "Nothing could prove our point better than a scare like that, making the whole country see how necessary it is to take an army into France. There couldn't be a better time to show up the Court party and to make the Commons discontented with it. There couldn't be a better time to get rid of Suffolk—this merchant-earl we've all heard so much about. And once we can get command of the Exchequer we can do anything."

"How are you going to set about getting rid of Suffolk, by the way?" asked the Duke of Gloucester, who even among friends could not resist making himself disagreeable.

The bishop laughed. "We follow the precedent set in '76. The Commons declare him unfit to hold office and the Lords judge him. It's been done once and I don't see why it shouldn't be done again."

"I can't see why we should encourage the Commons to think themselves better than they are." It was the complaining voice of the Countess of Derby that suddenly battered against the bishop's complacency.

"Oh it must undoubtedly be done through the Commons," Gloucester agreed. "Otherwise it would look too obviously a put-up show. I suppose the Commons will fall in with it all right?"

"No difficulty about that," the Earl of Arundel assured them. "Tell them what splendid people they are and they'll do anything."

"Fools," snorted Lady Warwick. "After all the fuss that's made of them, separate meetings in the Abbey Chapter House and all the rest of it, they're nothing but a lot of sheep."

"Did you ever come across that delightful passage in Aristotle," said the bishop turning to her very courteously, "in which he says: 'Those who have any complaint to bring against the magistrates say, "Let the people be the judges"; the people are only too happy to accept the invitation; and so the authority of every office is undermined.' This will be exactly the case at Westminster next month."

Supper over, the ladies retired, but the men sat on, talking over the fire. Plans were evolved for the distribution of adequate agents to spread propaganda among the knights and burgesses travelling up to Westminster, and for gaining a hold on London by dwelling upon the piteous case of an ex-mayor John of Northampton—imprisoned, for-

sooth, because he dared to object to the arrogant oligarchy that governed London under the leadership of Nicholas Brember, one of the King's friends.

"Of course we've got to be careful," the bishop insisted. "We don't want anyone to suspect that we're doing it to get anything out of it ourselves. We mustn't suggest for a minute that we're trying to control the King or to restrict his prerogative. That would be definitely illegal. We can only set up this commission on the grounds that he is a minor, incapable of choosing suitable ministers. And we've got to be careful who we put on the Commission. The two Archbishops and the Bishop of Winchester would give it an air of respectability, I think."

"And we've got to be careful too to make it possible for this commission to work. And it can't unless the Commons demand that it should be set up for a year at least." Arundel spoke with feeling, for he had already sat on two such commissions and knew exactly what it was to try to control the King. "If it's successful they may decide to prolong it for another year," he added but without much hope. He knew that they must always count on Richard's doing something unexpected to counteract them.

He was not wrong in his expectations. When the Commons' petition that de la Pole should be removed from office was publicly declared in Westminster Hall, Richard refused to preside over parliament. Instead he announced to his astonished household that they were to remove themselves on

the following day to the royal manor at Eltham, for the Commons had so incurred his displeasure that they should not meet again till they had withdrawn their impertinent request. While the palace was in a terrible state of bustle and confusion, he sat playing backgammon with the Marquis of Dublin and drinking rather a lot of wine.

"You do enjoy being unorthodox," Robert said to him as he handed him his winnings after the game.

"Yes, you didn't like my sticking in my base so that you could never get home." He drained his cup and laughed excitedly. "Lord, I'm sick of this game!" and he swept the pieces off the table with his sleeve. Then suddenly, rather shyly: "Robert, do you think I'm a fool to go off to Eltham?"

"My dear old ass, it's splendid. It's absolutely mated them." Robert looked across the table at him as he sat on one heel, tilting his chair back, his face quivering with suppressed excitement. "You know you really are rather a genius, Richard," he added laughing, "anybody else would have been afraid to do anything so entirely unprecedented. But you're the one person in the world who does what he wants to and damns convention. You're a great man; you're going to be It."

And Richard rocking on his chair, the other side of the table, found that he didn't care what happened to his kingdom or his prerogative or anything else as long as Robert continued to smile at him and to approve of the things he had done.

II

They thought they had cornered him at last, when by threats of deposition they had forced him back to Westminster, and compelled him to dismiss his ministers and sign away his control of his own household. He had given in after a month's display of absurd childishness and folly, creating de Vere Duke of Ireland to show his defiance, threatening them with the army of the King of France when they came to Eltham to treat with him. Rumours had got about that he had actually sent one of his chamber knights, Sir John Salisbury, to the French Court to ask for help in return for the surrender of Calais. From such actions Gloucester and the Arundels had nothing to fear. People said that this boy was clever, promising, and a dangerous enemy, but in a crisis all he could do was to behave like a spoilt child.

But the people who kept Christmas at Westminster Palace thought differently from Gloucester and the Arundels. They saw Richard every day.

Ann for her part, knew it was absurd to conceive of controlling Richard. When he burst into her rooms, the evening after his tempestuous interview with his uncles, frantic with grief and despair, she did think then that perhaps for once the war party had won, and could do no more than murmur uselessly, "It can only last a year." And when he buried his face in her arms and nothing could be

seen of him but his marvellous hair, she found it impossible to believe that there were people whose one pleasure seemed to be to hurt him and to load him with insults. How they could think of hurting anyone so young and eager and enchanting was more than she could understand. But she did think that night that it was all over, and that for the time anyway he was beaten.

She knew that he was awake all night, constantly tossing and turning over so violently that she herself got very little sleep. She imagined that he was still in a fever of rage and agony until once, as the room grew lighter towards morning, she opened her eyes and looked at him. He was lying quite still then, but he was not asleep: he was staring up at the bed curtains and on his face was a smile of pure rapture. She suddenly felt frightened of him: although she had never seen him look more beautiful than he looked then, his chin lifted proudly and stubbornly and his hair ruffled and untidy from his constant tossings, yet it was somehow uncanny to see him smiling like that and staring upwards. But as she looked at him he suddenly gave another of his wild convulsive movements, and rolled over on to his front. Then he broke into low ecstatic laughter.

"What are you doing?" she asked him, pretending to be sleepy to hide her alarm.

"Darling Ann, I'm so sorry. Did I wake you up?" He turned to her then, leaning on his elbow, and she saw he was still smiling. "Only I really

think I've seen a way out." And he proceeded to tell her what seemed fantastic to her at three o'clock in the morning, how he would leave Westminster immediately after Christmas, ignoring Gloucester's government completely, and not come back till the end of the year. He would spend that time raising an army, collecting a council and administration, and then return to throw out the war party for ever. As for Suffolk, deposed from the chancellorship though he might be, he would take him with him as a member of his council, and life would go on just as usual. The so-called government couldn't do much without the King, and even though they controlled the Privy Seal, he could still issue warrants by signet letter. Meanwhile Nicholas Brember must win London over, so that next November they would be ready to raise arms against those who were trying to override the laws of England. "That's what makes me so angry," he said, as if he hadn't said it a thousand times already. "They make the Commons believe they are acting for the good of the country and really, apart from trying to keep on this war which we can't afford, they're encouraging the people to break the law. It's no good hiding behind the fiction that I'm a minor, because I'm not. I'm almost twenty, and '*Nemo quidem de factis regis præsumat disputare, multo fortius contra factum suum venire.*' At least I know my Bracton."

III

Richard left Westminster on February 9, announcing that he was going northwards to accompany the Duke of Ireland as far as Wales. But he had no intention of allowing Robert to leave England until after November—until they had succeeded in overthrowing the Opposition. Robert was more valuable to him at the moment as Warden of Chester than as Duke of Ireland; besides, he wanted him to go on telling him he was a great man at times when he felt very sure that he was not.

But he found, as the days grew more springlike, that there was something rather unsatisfactory about Robert. He was growing more depressed and moody, and never stopped talking about Agnes if once he got a chance to begin. When during ceremonial functions Richard tried to catch his eye on occasions that only they two would consider funny, expecting that uplift of the left eyebrow which meant that Robert was amused, he found that he hadn't noticed the joke, but was gazing dreamily into space. He didn't seem to care about hunting or dancing, but sat about gloomily, singing most mournful dirges. From all this, Richard concluded that he was seriously in love with Agnes Launcekron.

Richard was naturally aggrieved. It was so like Robert to choose this year to be in love when he himself was so busy and so much occupied with

state affairs. Robert should have been wildly enthusiastic about his plan of summoning the judges to Shrewsbury "to get it put down in black and white what a king may or may not do." But Robert only looked as though these things were mere frivolities beside the greater things that Life held for those who were in love.

He talked it over with Ann, and once was brutal enough to tell her that it was all her fault. That day they were both tired after incessant travelling through the Midlands, and Ann irritably retorted that it was his vanity that was hurt because Robert thought more of Agnes than of him. It was so unlike them to bicker that he felt quite miserable about it for days, and wondered if she were right. But in spite of Robert's failure to play the rôle of sympathetic admirer, he couldn't bear the idea of parting with him; and indeed it would have been difficult to persuade him to go since he had to leave Agnes Launcekron behind.

After all it was bad luck that Robert should be married to Philippa de Coucy. She was another of Richard's undesirable cousins, and although half French had managed to inherit that unfortunate trait of priggishness which was so distressing in Henry of Derby. There was no subtlety or finesse, no real humour about some members of his family: Edmund of York was made of the same stuff, and it lay like a sort of superficial veneer over the crafty shifting, and despicable vanity of Thomas of Gloucester. He guessed that even his own father

had not been entirely free of it, judging from the conventional platitudes and bombastic phrases which had been reverently handed down to him as the sayings of the Black Prince. Who indeed had not got it except himself and John of Gaunt? A fear gripped him that perhaps he, Richard, was something like John of Gaunt: but Mary in Heaven would save him from committing John's atrocities.

It was in August, when the court was at Nottingham, that the disastrous episode occurred which was to lead to so much. His council had met to discuss the decision of the judges, and he noticed that Robert was absent, but that didn't surprise him very much. He was too much interested in the business at hand to think about Robert: here he had from the mouth of Sir Robert Tresillian after earnest consultation with the other justices, that the commission was quite illegal considering that he was of age, and that the people who forced it on the King and Commons were guilty of High Treason. Now nothing remained but to wait for November; and in the meanwhile London was growing steadily more loyal. John of Northampton had been converted from a dangerous enemy to a loyal servant by the genius of Simon Burley, who suggested that he was a more dangerous enemy in prison than he was out of it, as the nobles were pointing to him as a living example of the King's brutality; whereas if he were to be released—by the special request of some royalist lord such as the Duke of Ireland—he would be

grateful to his patron and friendly to the King.

When he had dismissed the council, a message came from Ann that he was to see her on an important matter as soon as he conveniently could. He found her rather flushed and decidedly angry, and Philippa was crying in a corner. She told him that Agnes had been carried off in the night, that Robert had not been seen this morning, and the conclusion was obvious. Philippa said that he had never come to bed all night.

Richard supposed that he ought to be saying comforting things to Philippa, but he didn't. He walked out of the room almost dazed, and took a long time to collect himself sufficiently to send for Robert. So this after all was Love, was it, after all the things that Robert had written about it—mere bodily lust.

He wondered what he should say to Robert when he came. He thought he ought to be angry, but he felt too tired and too miserable to work himself into a rage. And as time went on—Robert was evidently difficult to find—instead of growing angrier, he grew more and more depressed.

He had thought Robert different: he had thought that he at least would not have profaned Love by turning it into mere vulgarity. He thought of Robert's songs and his music; of his long expressive hands and his light, swaying body; of all that Robert had said about Love and about honour; of the perfect type of *amant entendedor* which he thought Robert had been. And now what was to happen: how could he justify Robert's behaviour to the out-

side world—for they would all know as soon as Philippa told her uncles—and still claim that Robert was a suitable person to be sent over to Ireland? "Marquis of Dublin," he cried out bitterly; "Duke of Ireland! Oh, Robert!"

At last Robert came in, curiously calm; but then did anything ever ruffle him? Richard turned to him in weary anger.

After all the terrible things he had been thinking about Robert, it was quite a shock to discover that he looked the same as usual. He was pursing his mouth rather oddly perhaps, but everything about him was so ordinary and familiar that Richard felt almost startled. He had been thinking all kinds of things about him, until he had seemed to turn into a grotesque monster, and there wasn't any Robert left. When the shock was over, the whole thing struck him suddenly as being extraordinarily funny.

Then he ran forward, flinging out his hands with an extravagant gesture of despair, and shaking with irresistible laughter.

"Robert," he said, "you perfectly ridiculous fool, what are we to do, now?"

"Well, you could do lots of things. You could kick me out of the palace and make a really effective scene." He stood on one absurd leg, his body thrown into a curiously distorted and engaging posture.

"So I could. Or I could employ Henry of Derby to do it for me. But, my dear Robert, don't you realise that the whole palace is in an uproar and

Ann is really angry?" He put his hands over his face, for with Robert standing like that in front of him, how could he think clearly? "But I know what I *will* do. Robert, do you want to marry this girl?"

"Of course. But that's impossible."

"I don't think it is," said Richard slowly. "After all an annulment on the grounds of consanguinity isn't hard to get. And you see I do want you to be respectably married before you go off to Ireland. But I wish we'd thought of that before."

## CHAPTER VI

### I

*Philippa, Duchess of Ireland, to Thomas, Duke of Gloucester, greeting:*

*I trust and hope, my dearest uncle, that in the absence of my own much loved father, you will not be slow to avenge the insult I have received at the hands of my husband, Robert, Duke of Ireland. May God and sweet Mary bear witness that I have always behaved to the said Duke in a manner becoming to a faithful, loving and loyal wife; and yet I am thrust aside, scorned and laughed at, while my lord pursues his unlawful amours unchecked. A further injury I have to suffer, namely, that our marriage has been declared null and void by the Papal Curia at Rome, in order that my lord, the said Duke of Ireland, may be permitted to marry the harlot he has received in unblessed union. I look to you, very dear and beloved uncle, to remedy these my misfortunes and bring shame to those that have brought them to pass.*

*I fear that it will grieve you also greatly to learn that our most illustrious and noble lord, the King, has summoned his judges to a solemn council at Shrewsbury and also at Nottingham, to discover whether the commission set up by the lords and*

*commons in Parliament assembled, be lawful or no. Alas, my lord, that I should write it, but the very truth indeed is that there were no legal precedents for that commission, and all those who have petitioned the lord King for its setting up have been declared guilty of high treason. Wherefore, very dear uncle, seeing that you are in peril of your life and that I, your niece, am disgraced and humiliated and must see my place taken both in the King's court and in my lord's affections by a Bohemian woman of no birth and loose morals, I make known these things to you, praying that Right may triumph and that God will protect those of His children who have always loved and followed His ways. I can write no more for tears.*

* * * * *

*Thomas, Duke of Gloucester, to Richard, Earl of Arundel, greeting:*

*We make known by these presents the sincere friendship and warm love that We most truly feel for the illustrious lord, Richard, Earl of Arundel; assuring him that idle tales and foolish rumours have not weakened this love that We bear him. Moreover, the said lord and ourselves, thus bound firmly by the chains of our love and by a common hatred for all that is not just and right, do earnestly seek together the safety, honour and well-being of our gracious lord the King and the everlasting salvation of his soul. And not We only but our most*

*dear nephew, Henry, Earl of Derby, and our dear kinsmen, Thomas, Earl of Warwick, and Thomas, Earl of Nottingham have joined with us in our sincere desire to remove from our dear lord King his most evil counsellors, who, considering his tender age, have persuaded him to forsake the paths of wisdom and justice, and to listen to their evil counsels.*

(" And what else?" inquired the recipient of this letter to the bearer of it.

The man looked nervously round him, and then whispered in Arundel's ear.

" The judges were summoned by the King to Nottingham where they declared the commission illegal. The King will overthrow it at the next parliament and will probably arrest for treason the lords mentioned here. To prevent this, the Duke desires you to go to Harringay at once, with as many men as you can raise, and meet him there in company with the lords. The King is expected at Westminster about the second week in November, and the Duke wishes you to have assembled well before that date."

" Tell the Duke that it shall be done;" and Arundel dismissed the messenger with some misgivings. For since they had failed to bluff the King into accepting an illegal commission, how might they end if they failed in a method that had not even the form of law?)

II

When Richard knelt before his altar-piece on the morning of November 11, he felt that his triumph was secure. Praying had not been easy to him ever since that day six years ago, when he had lost his faith in Church and Pope, after Robert had exposed the guile and hypocrisy of Cardinal Pileo. (Since then he had heard how the people of Ravenna had thrown out their Archbishop, nicknaming him for his self-seeking, the Cardinal of the Three Hats.) And when he thought of the cold brutality of Bishop Arundel, the arrogance and bigotry of Courtenay, the easy-going plasticity of Neville, the soulless competence of Wykeham, he knew these were not priests of the God he believed in. Thomas Rushook was a scholar, but hardly a priest; Thomas Merke, one of the most gifted of the Westminster monks, looked askance at a too literal interpretation of the Rule of St. Benedict. The Lollards blamed him for taking these people as his friends, and yet since there was no God within the Church, why not ruthlessly make use of some of the Church's power? The Church had tried to use him as her tool: he felt no compunction at reversing the order and using the Church as his . . . And yet sometimes at High Mass, the rich vestments of the priests, the solemn dignity of the lighted candles, the pure sweet smell of the incense, or some clear impersonal boyish voice singing the Agnus Dei, would make him feel

how very near was his God in the Sacraments of this same hypocritical Church . . . Because he loved the Mass so much, he had a deep-rooted disgust for all heretics . . . But it was difficult to pray if you mistrusted the very prayers you were called upon to say, and felt that even your confessor had not the fear of God before his eyes.

Yet this morning Richard broke away from his habit of mechanically telling his beads, for, looking up at the Virgin and the Angels with their chains of broomscods, he felt nothing but an overflowing gratitude for Her prayers and their service. It was they who had put it into his head to question the judges at Nottingham; it was they who had whispered to the judges the true answer. Truly they were working for him and he was the chosen vessel by which a new peace, a mighty lover of beauty, should come like a warrior and conquer the world.

The White Hart encircled with broomscods . . . Nobody would be able to put asunder what God had eternally joined.

He determined to go and see the painter before his audience with the lords. He would like to tell him how near they were to a realisation of his dreams, for when Nicholas Cheriton had been told to add the broomscods to the picture, he seemed to understand as nobody but Ann had understood, why it was so important to have them encircling the White Hart. In fact he had himself suggested that he should paint golden harts within a wreath of broomscods all over the scarlet of Richard's houpe-

lande, linked together by royal eagles, like the eagles on the blue robe of St. Edmund. The one man who gave Richard faith in the Church was the painter Nicholas Cheriton. And yet the Abbot had told him that before taking his vows, Nicholas had lived a very loose life indeed.

He asked Robert and John Montague to come with him to the Abbey, and they walked through the Palace gardens together. Although the trees and flower beds were bare and they trod upon a sodden carpet of blackened leaves, there was a faint summery feeling in the steaming air and Richard was almost hot. He hung upon Robert's arm, talking incessantly, and generally he was saying the same thing over and over again.

"Lord, I am excited. I wish I could think of something else. I suppose we're absolutely bound to succeed now. Think of London yesterday."

"I don't want to be a pessimist," observed John Montague at last, "but you can't really count on that exhibition meaning anything. I mean when the Mayor comes to meet you decked in your colours and three hundred men escort you to Westminster with cheers, and the women call out blessings on your name, it doesn't mean that they're going to sacrifice themselves for you."

"I don't want them to. There won't be any need for sacrifices. But what it does mean is that they do want me back, and they definitely don't like the lords. And anyway it won't matter. Arundel and

Warwick will be arrested this afternoon, and Gloucester will be very lucky if he's forgiven. He doesn't deserve to be, but still one oughtn't to behead the son of Edward III if one can avoid it. What line do you think Henry of Derby will take up? Will he say how loyal he is and how much he loves me, or stick to the others and say he was trying to do his duty? Let's have a bet on it."

He caught Robert looking at him and turned away hastily. When Robert looked at him in that half-amused, half-affectionate way, he never could meet his eyes.

They wandered into the cloisters and sought out Nicholas Cheriton. He was taking advantage of the damp weather to lay gold on to a panel. He was holding a piece of parchment in his left hand, and laying a gold leaf on to it very carefully with a pair of pincers. They watched him wet a part of the panel with a brush dipped in white of egg solution, then slide the gold from the parchment on to it and pull away the parchment with a quick jerk. He pressed down the gold with his handkerchief, peering at it with his face very near the panel to see if any of it were broken. Then he saw the King and rose to his feet.

"Do go on," Richard begged. "I love watching you. I've never seen a picture in this stage before."

Fascinated, he watched the painter's quick, deft, nervous hands as he laid another gold leaf on to the panel. But he noticed that Nicholas held everything very close to his eyes.

Robert asked what it was going to be when it was finished, and if the egg ever went bad. Nicholas answered him absently, screwing up his eyes. "Yes, I don't think that's broken . . . No, we always put vinegar in the tempera . . . I wonder if that's all right, I can't see very well . . . Yes, vinegar, that preserves it . . . I wonder if that's . . ."

Richard looked over his shoulder. "No, it's broken there, d'you see, in that corner."

"Well, I'm afraid I can't see to mend that," Nicholas murmured, and then whispered a hasty *Ave Maria.*

Richard looked at the others in horror, and found that they too were staring blankly. Rather awkwardly John mumbled, "Don't overdo it," and Richard feeling desperately that the conversation should be changed, began to tell him of the coming triumph of the Broomscod Collar—but not a bit in the way he had imagined he would tell it. Nicholas smiled, but Richard saw that he really wasn't interested any more; he was looking into a future in which wars and treaties seemed to have very little significance. And Richard himself, standing in the cloisters in the watery November sunlight, his arm still in Robert's, realised that there was something worse in the world than deposition to a King, and that was blindness to a painter.

III

He was expecting the leaders of the war party any minute now, but the thought of their interview and subsequent arrest, of Gloucester grovelling on the ground and raised by the hand of a forgiving nephew, ceased to give him much satisfaction.

Since his visit to the Abbey, some of the glory had departed from the Broomscod Collar, and he didn't feel at all like conducting a dramatic scene. He sat with his head in his hands, and his councillors looked anxiously at one another as if they feared that the King's unfortunate temperament was going to betray him.

Then the messenger he had sent to the lords arrived back at the palace and asked to see him. "The lords say, sire, that they are afraid to come!"

Richard sat up, then, scarlet. "Afraid to come! They can disobey the King's command with that sort of excuse! Did you say that the King was prepared to back his commands with force?"

"Yes, sire, I did. But they've got five armies there at Harringay all ready for fighting. It seems they've known about the council at Nottingham for quite a long time."

"Good God!"

Richard fell back heavily in his chair and his face now was white. "Where's Nicholas Brember?"

"Here, sire."

"Did you see the mayor this morning? Is he

prepared to support me if I order the lords to disband their armies?"

"Frankly, sire, he isn't. John of Northampton has half London against us. And I shouldn't think the other half would be much use against Arundel's troops."

"Northampton's been working against us!" Blow after blow seemed to be falling on Richard. "But we made such a point of telling him it was the Duke of Ireland who got him his release!" He buried his head in his hands, then, raising it suddenly, looked round at the blank faces of his friends. "Oh, for God's sake," he shouted at them, "can't anyone tell me what to do now?"

Then Suffolk spoke, his quiet level voice reminding Richard of last year's parliament when he had conducted his own defence in exactly that same soothing tone. "I would suggest, sire, that you let matters stand as they are till this parliament has sat. The most the lords can do is to extend the commission, and I don't believe the Commons will support it in the face of the judges' decision."

"They'll do anything with a couple of hundred archers tickling their ribs," Sir Simon Burley murmured to Robert de Vere.

"And may I most heartily second Lord Suffolk's suggestion," said the Archbishop of York in his pleasant clerical tones. "For if they do force the Commons, you withdraw, collect your army from the north and midlands—which will easily outnumber theirs, and moreover their action will

alienate the more moderate party—and simply put them down with one decisive battle."

"I should like to know," said Richard thoughtfully, "who told them about the council at Nottingham."

Notice was sent to the lords that it was the King's wish that they should disband their troops, but nobody was surprised that the wish was ignored. Meanwhile Nicholas Brember worked hard among his fellow guildsmen to counteract the propaganda of John of Northampton, and clerks were kept busy writing to the sheriffs of the north and midlands. Richard himself had a craving for amusement to take his mind off politics, and the Court was seldom gayer than during those three or four anxious days.

On the evening of November 16th, Nicholas Brember arrived at Westminster after a hard day's work in London, wondering how he could break even worse news to the King. He wandered into the minstrels' gallery before making his presence known, and looked down into the hall below.

Everybody was wearing some sort of fancy dress. People dressed as swans, lions, foxes, or even donkeys, mingled in gay incongruity among ravishing impersonations of the Seven Deadly Sins. This, he supposed, was another of the King's amazing devices for killing time till the next parliament. An exquisitely slender Eastern prince floated by, with a magnificent headdress sparkling with rubies and a brilliant golden robe studded with pearls. This he recognised as the Duke of Ireland, for none of

his imitators had quite managed to achieve that curious snakelike swing of the hips so perfectly as the Duke himself. Craning his neck over the balustrade, Nicholas discovered a group clustering round a Greek hero with a bearskin flung over his white and gold tunic and a circlet of diamonds checking the wildness of his hair; he was standing on a chair waving a wine cup and looking a little drunk, Brember thought. And he didn't quite approve of the display of bare arm that his King thought necessary for the costume of a Theseus or a Perseus.

But it seemed a pity to spoil his evening with bad news, and yet Brember had had the strictest orders to report to the King personally immediately he learnt any serious developments on the policy of the lords. So at last he sent a page to say that he awaited the King's pleasure in another room.

Richard came surprisingly promptly, his face twisted into an expression of extreme agitation. Brember could only tell him how he had heard today that the lords, not content with extending the powers of the commission, intended to attack five of the King's friends at the next parliament and accuse them of high treason.

"How can they?" Richard shouted. "How can my friends be guilty of high treason when all they do is to carry out my commands?"

"Apparently we are advising you against your own interests and against the welfare of your kingdom."

Richard was standing at the fireplace warming his

bare arms. His head was turned away from Nicholas Brember. "Who are the five, did you hear?"

"The Archbishop of York, the Duke of Ireland, the Earl of Suffolk, Sir Robert Tresillian and myself."

Suddenly aware of the fatuous bearskin still slung over his shoulder, Richard pulled it off violently and stamped on it. "Page!" he roared, "get me some clothes I can wear!"

He decided not to see the others till the next morning and contented himself with sending them messages of his good will. But he felt he must see Robert, and sought him in his bedroom. He tried to think out a line of action, but it became more and more obvious as he reviewed all possible courses, that the only thing left was abject submission on his part and hasty flight on that of his friends. There was not time to get an army down from the midlands to save their lives before the next parliament; he could only hope to raise it later and attack the lords when their armies had gone home. Meanwhile how was he to get through it all without Suffolk's sane judgment and Robert's laughter?

Something of this he said to Robert.

"There seem to be three possible courses," Robert said, sitting down beside him on the bed. "(*a*) You hand us over to the lords as traitors. (*b*) We all run away and the lords in their wrath depose you." (Richard jumped.) "Or (*c*) we fight."

"(*a*)," said Richard, "is inconceivable; (*c*) is

impossible; therefore (*b*) is the only course. Query: Will the lords dare to depose me? Answer to query: No."

"(*b*)," said Robert, "is equally inconceivable to a de Vere; (*c*) is *not* impossible with a de Vere as general. In fact (*c*) is the only course."

They were both laughing. But Richard, with rather desperate levity, begged Robert to consider the discomforts and squalor of warfare, and reminded him of how a contingent of fleas had brightened the Scots campaign of '85. "Really you can't go. I shan't let you."

Robert was standing up now, and as Richard finished, he bent over him, seizing his shoulders. "I'm not going to allow these devils to insult the King, ignore his prerogative, and possibly depose him, without raising a finger to prevent them. I'm not going to sneak off abroad, leaving you all alone. I'm going north at once. My dear Richard"—as he was still faintly protesting—"there never has been a king in the world's history so keen about his job, so single-minded in his aims, so loyal to his friends as you are. And if your friends can't put up a fight when you're in danger of losing your throne, they don't deserve the honour of your love."

It was the first time Richard had ever seen him really roused, and he thought it was worth having a few struggles with his uncles to awaken this slumbering spirit in Robert.

## CHAPTER VII

### I

You heard a great deal in poetry about the month of May, but nothing was ever said about December. It would be amusing, Robert thought, to compose a little song to Agnes in which you might beg her to look with favour not only upon days when larks soared joyfully into a sapphire sky, but upon days such as this when there was no sun, not even frost, but simply a raw damp bleak mist which slapped at your face as if you had floundered into a line of wet blankets. He started to think out a first line, but found the problem of whether French or English would be the more preferable medium, too hard to solve, and gave it up. But certainly whether you could wring poetry out of a day like this or not, it was very uncomfortable to be conducting a campaign in such weather: to be obliged to ride along endless muddy lanes through this cold, wet air, straining your eyes for a sight of the enemy and seeing nothing but flat fields and rows of willows, vanishing after a hundred yards behind a grey curtain of mist.

His army clattered into Witney and scattered itself with great rapidity among the inhabitants. Robert himself and Sir Thomas Molyneux, his second-in-command, asked for hospitality at an

abbey near by, and there they spent the night. The Prior was a friendly man, loyal to the King, and Robert didn't think it imprudent to tell him something of his plans. Besides, he wanted to talk it over with somebody who knew the country, and he was tired of Molyneux' uncritical admiration. He opened the subject by asking how far was the nearest bridge across the Thames.

"The situation is roughly this," he said. "We can't risk a battle with their combined forces in open country, so our only chance is to make for London as quickly as possible, hoping to accumulate a bigger army as we go south. They're guarding the main road through Oxford, so we're creeping down this way, looking for the bridge. You say there's one quite close?"

"Yes, there's Radcot," said the Prior. "Only you've come a little out of your way, you know. It's not much of a road, but I suppose you don't mind that."

He looked across at the grave young man opposite him and tried to hide his amusement. Of this very ordinary person so many curious rumours had spread: that he had won the King's heart by witchcraft or by means too foul to be uttered. But seeing him anxious and white-faced, with strained eyes and mud on his cheeks, you could believe nothing evil of him and certainly nothing supernatural. He was simply a tired little boy, worn out with playing at soldiers. He needed sleep and a hot bath and a good meal.

The bell chiming for Lady Mass reminded Robert as he sat in the guest room thinking of Agnes, that he might see death that day, and that the correct thing to do was to hear Mass. But why, he thought, kicking at the fire, should he do the correct thing when he didn't feel like doing it on the last day of his life? He so loathed people who in prosperity despised the Virgin's prayers but fell grovelling at her feet when they thought they were going to die. They were even worse than people who heard three masses a day regularly just to be on the safe side, or the people who went on going to Church mechanically without thinking about it at all. What a farce it all was. Well, if his life were saved to-day, it would not be, he thought in some satisfaction, because Agnes had prayed for him. He could not imagine that gay, fearless, independent spirit drugging itself with prayers. But he did want to live, to get back to her, to feel with his own cheek the soft comfort of her rich, almost luminous, dark skin and to hear her wonderful voice that was like no other woman's he had ever heard . . . He looked out of the window and saw the black figures of the brothers moving slowly across the quad, and Thomas Molyneux following behind, looking up to see if he were coming. He sat doggedly on the edge of his bed, shutting his ears to the bell, and thinking joyfully how terribly shocked Molyneux was going to be.

They were having breakfast in the Prior's *camera* when a soldier came to say that troops had been

sighted to the north-east. He couldn't see what arms they were bearing, but their numbers were not large.

Robert sprang up with a suitable expression of anxiety. "Blow the horn in the market place. By the time I get there they should all be ready." He shouted excitedly for his squire. After all it was rather fun this war, and quite diverting to play the part of the complete hearty warrior, if only to see if you could do it.

The sound of the horn and the report that the enemy were at hand drove the royal army reluctantly from the women of Witney. The market place was thronged with men, archers and knights, all bearing the White Hart of King Richard and the Red Cross of St. George.

"There's the Duke," a woman cried out. "Isn't he lovely?" then turning rapturously to her sister, "Doesn't it make you feel like a good cry?" Robert certainly felt a most heroic figure, but more like laughing than crying at the thought of himself in stiff unaccustomed armour, with his own Blue Boar on his shield and the White Hart on his breast. It was all incredibly funny.

Then they hung about all day, looking for Arundel's men, who seemed to have completely disappeared. It was nearly four o'clock when they came upon them, and they fought in gathering darkness.

It was their first battle and they had won it. The Earl of Arundel's archers had fled at the sight of

the Cheshiremen and Robert immediately charged upon the irresolute cavalry. There was very little resistance: the army retreated northwards the way it had come.

Robert did not pursue the flying cavalry for there were better things to do. He gathered from the appearance of Arundel that he had come to cut him off before he reached Radcot or else to try to get to the bridge before him. He could not consider himself safe till he had crossed the river, leaving the whole of the lords' forces on the other side of it. He would break the bridge at Radcot, and send if possible a small company back by Farringdon to break the other at Oxford, while he went on to Windsor. He wanted to rush on to Radcot that day, but Molyneux laughed when he said so.

"You'll never get them on to-night," he said; "they're thirsty and they've won a battle."

So Robert went back to the monastery and to please Molyneux he went to Compline. When thanks were given for the day's victory, Robert began to wonder how far it was due to God and how far to himself. After all, if he hadn't charged at that particular moment . . . How often, he thought, men in fear of hell-fire thanked God for victories they knew very well had been won by their own skill and good judgment.

"*Fratres, sobrii estote et vigilate quia adversarius vester diabolus, tanquam leo rugiens circuit quærens quem devoret: cui resistite fortes in fide. Tu autem Domine, miserere nobis.*"

WILTON DIPTYCH (Reverse of Left Panel)

*National Gallery*

But Robert did not hear the warning. He was picturing the discomfiture of the war party left behind on the wrong bank of the Thames, and himself presenting Richard with the army he had raised. He thought of how Richard might look out on the White Harts pouring into the courtyard at Windsor: he knew exactly what he would look like—first he would smile as if he had some guilty but most amusing secret, then grow solemn, staring into the future. Then he would turn to Robert with a sudden affectionate gesture—probably he would grasp Robert's elbows and excitedly squeeze them —and tell him that there was really nobody like him in the world. Then he would laugh—his face almost broken with delight—when Robert told him about the gallant figure he had cut at Witney, with women sobbing all round him: "No—no." He would moan lifting up his hands, "I can't bear it." And then they would have to have something to celebrate the occasion, "something" (Robert could almost hear him saying it, rubbing his hands and lifting his eyebrows), "something particularly potent."

That was why Robert did not hear the warning.

## II

In the morning, cold and damp as it was, Robert led his men out of Witney to Radcot Bridge. They were all very cheerful as they waved farewell to its

inhabitants, shouting out that they'd come back in time for the New Year's wassailing with the Duke of Gloucester's body tied to the wesley-bob. It was a flat country, damper and mistier than ever as you approached the river, with lanes so muddy and cattle-trodden that the archers could scarcely march along without sinking up to their ankles in slime. Robert could hear the water squeezing out with a rhythmical sucking sound every time Blancheflower, his charger, put down one of her enormous hoofs. He thought it must be very uncomfortable for Blancheflower to plunge through it with the weight of all his armour and her own. It was appallingly cold too: his feet were quite numb inside the tight comfortless steel, and he could hardly feel the rain on his frozen chin.

To take his mind off his discomforts he took out of his glove the letter he had received from Richard about two days back. It began as a formal writ under the secret seal and Robert recognised the hand of Richard Melford, the King's secretary; it briefly informed him that the work of winning over the Londoners was still going on and that various unsuccessful attempts had been made to bring the more moderate of the nobility to the right way of thinking. Sir John Montague had hopes of converting his brother, the Earl of Salisbury, and the Bishop of Winchester seemed decidedly sympathetic. The King hoped that the Duke would bring his army direct to Windsor unless circumstances should force him to act otherwise.

But what pleased Robert about the letter and made him take it out and read it again was an untidy scrawl by Richard himself at the end of it almost impossible to read. Robert could imagine him calling out for the letter to read over, and then suddenly seizing the quill out of Melford's hand. "Whatever happens, my dear Robert," he had written, "remember that I am prepared both to live and to die with you."

"There's the bridge!" Molyneux shouted at his side and he thrust the letter back into his glove.

A sharp bend in the road brought them to a solitary shepherd's cottage which had given the bridge its name. To the right was a thick wood, to the left marshes going down to the river. And in front the little narrow wooden bridge—the precious key to victory. In a few minutes they would all be over it.

Robert could never quite remember what happened after that. There was suddenly confusion, shouts of "Henry of Derby!" a thud of hoofs along the grass and arrows spurting out of the fog.

It was useless to try and charge upon the advancing archers as they struggled out of the wood where they had been hiding, for all his own foot soldiers were between the knights and the enemy, too confused and startled to draw their bows.

It was then that Robert lost his head. He could see nothing ahead but certain defeat and all survivors hanged for raising arms against the enemies of the King. He couldn't see the men mowed down

in hundreds when there was hope of their being allowed to go peacefully back to their homes. He dug his spurs furiously into Blancheflower and shouted to them not to retaliate. "We can't possibly win—I'm the only one they want—they'll save your lives if you don't attempt to shoot."

"We've come all this way," shouted Molyneux defiantly; "let us at least put up some sort of a fight!" And the White Harts who heard him cheered. But Robert, screaming at them like a frenzied housewife, dashed through their ranks and scattered them like hens. Then he set Blancheflower at the bridge and disappeared in a volley of mud.

For months, even years afterwards, he used to spend sleepless nights thinking out what he might have done at that moment. Should he, if only for the satisfaction of that phantom which now gnawed at his vitals, have made frantic efforts to rally his men and stand firm against the attacks of Henry of Derby? And sometimes he would live again the horror of that moment when, having goaded a sobbing Blancheflower over the bridge, he saw through the ever thickening mist that there was another to cross and it was broken. How vividly he would always remember striking frantically across the marshes eastwards along the river bank with poor Blancheflower floundering through the swampy fields and he snatching off gloves, helmet, surcoat, to lighten the weight, both of them wondering if the heavy clinging mud would win in the

struggle and suck them in to a frightful death. And in the bitterness of his despair he would wish that it had won: for nothing could be worse than the life that was left to him—even Agnes, driven mad by his fits of depression and gloom, had gone back to her own people and he was alone.

Henry of Derby, perceiving that the Duke had fled and the King's army was making no resistance, ordered his archers to cease fire, but he allowed his men to loot the small array of dead bodies while he discussed his next step with his knights. For so young a man he seemed curiously unmoved by his victory, and only showed his feelings when a mail glove belonging to the Duke of Ireland was brought to him containing a letter from the King. "This is rather important," he said indifferently, but his face betrayed his gratification at discovering something of his cousin's which, if made public, would so utterly shame him.

## III

The altar-piece now stood in the White Chapel of the Tower of London. It was here that the rebel peasants had discovered Archbishop Sudbury, dragged him out and murdered him, when Richard was treating with another contingent from his barge at Mile End. But the situation was even graver now with the well-ordered troops of Gloucester and Arundel outside the city walls, bringing home to

Richard in a far subtler manner that might was right. They committed no atrocities but they were much more deadly foes.

Ann knelt before the Blessed Sacrament, but her eyes were on the altar-piece. The light coming in from a side window had caught the gold of the picture and the wreaths of broomscods round each golden hart were shining with particular intensity. She might have been thinking of them, of the peace policy they symbolised and its awful consequences; she might have been reproaching herself for that night so long ago when she had rashly suggested to Richard the painting of the broomscods. She might have been reproaching the angels for forgetting their mission, and for allowing the ungodly to triumph; she might have been praying for their help now when it seemed as if Richard would indeed be deposed.

But she was doing none of these things. She was staring at the little foot peeping out between Our Lady's finger and thumb, and praying for an heir to the throne of England.

# PART II

## CHAPTER I

### I

Ann was reading in her room. She sat near the window for better light, wrapped in furs, for the day was cold. A great many books were spread before her: it looked indeed as if she meant business.

John Purvey, an eminent Lollard scholar, had sent her his translation of the Gospels, with the hope that it would win her favour; and she certainly liked it better than the other Bibles produced by his sect, for it was carefully annotated with quotations from the Fathers after the manner of the Schoolmen. Ann liked this adventure into the unknown: hitherto the writings of St. Chrysostom, St. Jerome and the rest had been reserved for the clergy and the intelligentzia of the upper classes alone. She approved of the implication that if the people were to read the Bible they should read the Fathers' glosses as well, for how else would they understand what they were reading?

But she was too good a scholar to read Purvey's Gospels uncritically. People said that the Lollards often mistranslated the Scriptures to give countenance to their own heresies, so she must go carefully through the Gospels comparing them sentence by sentence with the Vulgate. She thought

at first that she would find this a difficult and probably a boring task, but when she got into it she was surprised to find how fascinating it was. Purvey had been less literal than the compilers of the other Lollard Bible she had read, and the story came to her through the vernacular with a freshness and a familiarity that brought her much nearer to the humanity of the Person she had been taught to call God—so near in fact that at times it almost shocked her.

From Thomas Merke she had borrowed Aquinas' *Catena Aurea*—the glossed Gospels upon which Purvey had based his work—and she was now hunting for deliberate mistranslations of the Fathers. It was then that she began to grow weary: the *Catena* was not his only source apparently, and there were a great many glosses that she could not trace at all. Besides, she had difficulties with the vocabulary: her Latin was not all that it might be when she came to decipher abstruse technicalities of theology.

Richard found her thus when he came in from hunting; he kissed her lightly on the top of her head and picked up one of the books. "Ann, my dearest," he said in horror and put it down again.

Ann gravely explained what she was doing. She knew that her gravity would only delight him the more. He adored teasing her.

"You know I'm all against this Bible propagation," he baited her. "They don't understand it if they do read it, and do you think they understand

the glosses? Even I find the Fathers rather heavy going. And I expect he's translated them all wrong to sanction his own frightful doctrines."

"I don't think he has," said Ann. "At least I haven't discovered anything so far."

Richard laughed at her. "You give it to some real enemy of the Lollards like our friend Archbishop Arundel and see if he thinks the same as you do." He yawned. "How you can stay indoors all day is beyond me. I'm afraid I shall have to kiss you again."

Seeing that as long as he sat on the arm of her chair, kissing her, further study would be impossible, Ann shut her books. But of course she would rather have him there and feel his mouth close to her hair than read all the books in the world. But he was speaking again.

"Did you know, Ann, that Lancaster is on his way home from Spain?"

"I don't know whether I want him to come home or not." Ann puzzled over the problem, frowning. "I can't make out whether we'll be better off than we are or worse. What do you think?"

"Ann, do you know I've never noticed that funny little mole on the back of your neck before."

"I'm very glad you haven't," she said, rubbing it uncomfortably; "it's not anything to be proud of."

"Oh, I like it. Don't cover it up. But how amazing of me not to have noticed it before. But about Lancaster. I think I'm rather looking for-

ward to seeing him. He's witty at least, and I've always been rather fond of him."

Ann was much surprised. "Richard, you know you hate him."

"Oh, no. Nothing so crude as hate. He doesn't make me feel ill as the other members of the family do. And he's quite changed his politics since the King of Castile has become his son-in-law. All the French princes are his bosom friends I hear."

"Richard!" Ann became suddenly excited and seized his wrist. "Do you think John of Gaunt will help us push through the peace?"

He looked down at her, trying to be calm. "That's rather the idea," he said, and she watched his exultation breaking through his hopelessly inadequate reserve. But soon he was quite solemn and thoughtful, his chin resting on the back of her chair.

"It's a most curious business, all this," he said slowly. "After all the fuss we've made, I keep wondering why we want peace so badly and why we've sacrificed so much for it. Sometimes I even wonder if I do want it. And sometimes I wonder whether I'm not simply trying to get it because I hate Gloucester and Arundel so, or even because there's money in it, and just hiding behind all his talk about the Broomscod Collar and vows to Our Lady because I don't want to recognise my real petty little motives."

It always amused Ann to notice what odd things he did with his body when he was coming out with

something that concerned his soul. Now he was rubbing his forehead against the carved knob of her chair. But what was he saying? "Doesn't it seem to you, Ann, that the holy cause has become a little ridiculous?" She pulled herself together.

"No, it doesn't," she said firmly. "But let's think it out. You struggled for it first because you knew that we couldn't afford a war and because you loved and respected the French. And because you were convinced that you were right in what you did, you naturally took it to Our Lady's feet; and when She took it up it became holy. Your hatred for Gloucester and Arundel is only the corollary of your love for the Cause. If you allow yourself to think of other motives which were quite unworthy of you when you first wore that collar, it shows that you are deteriorating and not the Cause."

She looked at him severely: she had to twist round to do it because his head was still resting on the back of the chair. "Ann, how marvellous," he said after quite a long pause and she noticed that his fingers had begun to play restlessly with the cushions; "And I was thinking how honest and sincere I was being. But do you think I am deteriorating?" he began suddenly in quite a different voice, springing up and starting to walk round the room; "I wonder if I am."

Ann thought it fitting to nip this mood of introspection in the bud. "I haven't noticed it," she said, and returned to St. Thomas Aquinas.

II

She gained little satisfaction out of John of Gaunt's visit to Sheen, even though he appeared most ready to support the policy of peace. For although Richard pretended that he was only taking John into his favour in order to use him as a tool, she could see that he was pleased and excited by his uncle's flattery and fascinated by his extraordinary charm. And John talked well an every subject from Lollardy to painting; he delivered his epigrams with a certain French polish; he talked of the art of André Beauneveu, of the poems of Christine de Pisan and Eustace Deschamps. Above all things in the world did he desire to return to France and to arrange terms of peace.

Moreover he was thoroughly shocked, as well he might be, with his brother's action at the end of '87, when a small party of disappointed lords had set up their wills against the sanctity of the laws of England. He had not heard the full facts of the case till Richard told him. Now he heard for the first time how in the face of all the Commons Gloucester and Arundel had ignored the decision of the Judges that no one had a right to prevent the King from managing his own household or choosing his own friends; had given offices of state to all their own partisans and had beheaded or banished from Court any persons who might act against them. He heard, too, how they had hounded to death all the old

servants of the Black Prince—even Sir Simon Burley who was loved and respected by everyone. (Ann noticed that Richard did not add that Henry of Derby had become a most unexpected defender of Simon Burley, even to the extent of quarrelling with his uncle of Gloucester, because that attitude of sportsmanlike generosity was all the more hateful to him after Henry had exposed his letter to Robert de Vere. It was almost worse that it should be Henry who had taken it upon himself to champion Burley, than if nobody had raised a finger in his defence.)

And John made just the right reply. The commission, he said, was an insult to the King and the royal house, the proceedings of parliament an insult to the common law which even Kings respected. What would happen to freedom and to justice if by surrounding London with troops and deceiving its inhabitants with vain promises, you could push your own party into office and kill off those who didn't agree with you? That was what a King was for, to preserve order and justice and to prevent rival parties from bidding for popular support with lies. and if he were set aside, there would be nothing left but anarchy. That was John's view, and as it was exactly Richard's own, he was too overjoyed to speak. He simply sat and stared at his uncle with eyes like blue lamps.

"That's what I mean," he said at last, "when I said that the law was in my mouth. I meant that I represented, I personified, law. But they twisted it

into meaning that I was claiming that I could alter the law if I wanted to. As if anyone would presume to alter the law except themselves."

John gave one of his delightfully sympathetic laughs.

"But I didn't give in," Richard persisted walking round the room very fast. "I said I wouldn't agree to anything that injured my prerogative, so they were forced to act as though I were still a minor. Then I had them, because they hadn't got a leg to stand on when I came of age." He began to laugh himself then. "I must tell you what happened. I strode into one of their council meetings —that upset them rather because in their eyes the King ought never to go to a council meeting, he ought to be in the nursery sucking his coral—and asked them how old I was. Poor old Thomas Arundel looked too sick, and one of the clerks by way of being helpful wrote it down on a tablet for him because he thought the old devil had forgotten it. However, he at last managed to confess I was twenty-two, with some attempt at civility. I was too utterly polite myself. I said, 'Then perhaps you will agree that at the age of twenty-two any man of property is considered old enough to look after his estates himself?' And I thanked them all for looking after my kingdom for me and would the Archbishop be so good as to hand over the seal?"

He was sitting precariously balanced on a small card table now, brimming over with excitement and quite carried away by his own astuteness. But Ann,

intent on her tapestry, knew well that the whole thing had not been quite so romantic as that. He had forgotten certain terrible occasions when he had been completely cowed, terrified out of his wits at the thought of death or deposition, agreeing to anything, even the deaths of his supporters. And he had forgotten that his magnificent declamation about his prerogative had been said sullenly, defiantly, as by a child at bay, without much idea of its being useful to him afterwards. No; Richard had not come out entirely well in that crisis, especially when in the depths of horror and mortification after the disaster at Radcot Bridge, he had driven a broken Robert out of Windsor, shouting out that he had betrayed him.

But he was pleased with himself now, and with reason. She couldn't be hard on him, considering that the situation had been so awful and he, after all, very young. It was horrid of her to think these thoughts about him when that boy would confess his most bitter humiliation to an uncle he had hoped to impress? She hated herself for being so disloyal when he was happy and bursting with pride. But she knew what was coming next: John would hear how subtle he was being, how he was most strictly legal in all that he did, most careful in his choice of ministers, how he was politeness itself to his former enemies, for that was the only way to baffle them. And meanwhile, since force was his sole weapon of defence, all over England were groups of loyal knights and yeomen being drawn into his service

by propagandist meetings held in hostelries under the sign of the White Hart. The men of Cheshire were billeted all over the country to recruit them: and there was a generous supply of free beer at the White Hart taverns. (The army was, of course, only a safeguard, he was careful to add, and would never be used except to put down rebellions; but you must be sure, he insisted, that you could call up troops at a moment's notice.) And all the time he was getting parliament's approval for everything he did: he was utterly unimpeachable.

Yes; he had substituted his old eager generous violence for a sort of cunning he was pleased to call subtlety. But Ann was so made that her love for him could not decrease: she saw that the shattering events of the past two years had hardened him, made him cynical and suspicious of honesty, but she had shared his anguish with him and that was fuel enough for her love. Besides, had he changed so much after all? As she listened to him talking to John of Gaunt and half imitating his air of cultured sophistication, she was reminded of the Richard she first knew, who turned up his nose at the childishness of Henry of Derby and tried to talk like Robert de Vere.

## III

The person who was most glad to see the Duke of Lancaster back in England was his brother the Duke of York. During the past difficult and troublous

times Edmund of Langley had found it very hard to know where his duty lay, and to decide which party, his nephew's or his youngest brother's, was really working for the good of the kingdom. When Thomas of Woodstock put it to him that unless some effort was made to stop this terrible pro-French movement, the whole country would be destroyed by French arms, it certainly seemed that there was nothing else to do but to protest against the Court policy. And yet it was only too true that the Commons would bear no more taxation—one did not want the Peasants' Revolt over again—so was not greater security to be found in peace than in war? When he said this to Thomas he only laughed at him. "Do you think we can trust the French to keep any terms of peace? Do you think they have forgotten Creçy and Poitiers? Don't you understand that we are playing into their hands by all this talk of treaties and truces, and simply giving them time to recover sufficiently to invade us." And his words were confirmed by the French King's attempt to land an army on the south coast in the summer of '86. But even then were they—was anybody—justified in raising arms against the King because they didn't approve of his policy? And it wasn't as if it were only a boy's rash whim, but it was the carefully weighed opinion of men like Simon Burley, James Berners and John Beauchamps—all sound thinkers and loyal friends of the Black Prince. He couldn't believe that they were all fools. And would Alexander Neville, the Archbishop of York,

have become so ready a convert to the King's party if he had not been convinced that there was something in it? And yet could you trust the French? Could you really expect them to be satisfied with the presence of the English in Gascony and in Calais, and to permit Richard to bear the proud title of King of England and France?

So Edmund of Langley was deeply thankful that John of Gaunt had come home. For even in 1390, when things seemed to be going more smoothly, he still had some serious problems to face. Was it true, as Thomas declared, that Richard's dramatic display of power at that council on May 3, the year before, was done in order to continue his pacific advances to France? And if so, weren't they in the same position of danger as in '86, with less chance of preventing such a course? Richard's very friendliness made things so difficult. But now John had come back, he would have to declare himself either in favour of or opposed to Richard's policy, and then Edmund's doubts would be set at rest. You might suspect Thomas of taking an unbalanced view because he had always hated Richard, but John could be trusted not to let his likes and dislikes run away with him.

It was very soon clear that John was pro-French. He hadn't been in England long before he was off again on a mission to the French Court. And before he went he had organised another embassy to go to Scotland on the same errand. Moreover nobody could be more loyal to his King than John appeared

to be: people said that the two were quite inseparable. Joyfully then, Edmund could express sentiments of sincere affection to his nephew, and could send his sons to Court.

Edmund was very proud of his two sons, but especially of the younger who was called Richard after his King. They were both good-looking attractive boys, but Dick had his heart, for Dick at a very early age had shown an extraordinary skill in wrestling and fencing. Edward, the elder, had unfortunately not shown such promise, but he was a clever boy with a taste for poetry and music, and many people had admired his uncommon colouring, combining as he did the flaxen hair of his father's family with the dark eyes and skin of his Spanish mother. This year, 1390, Edward was eighteen; it was time for his cousin to be reminded of his existence, and probably an earldom would be found for him. As for Dick, he would be noticed by the right people when still a child, and would get the best education into the bargain. Edmund could imagine how the Queen would like to hear him sing.

They were presented to the King at Christmas, at a great banquet held at Sheen. The whole world was there—John of Gaunt of course and his unhappy, forsaken Duchess, the Holland brothers and their wives (they were both earls now, so why not Edward, who was of royal blood?), the Exeters, the Staffords, the Dispensers, Lord Salisbury and his brother Sir John Montague, Lady Oxford and her

daughter-in-law Philippa, ex-Duchess of Ireland. The Arundels were not there nor the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester; the disagreeable young Countess of Derby had come unattended by her husband, for he was away in Prussia. And in front of all these people Dick had been asked to sing some of his songs.

Edmund wondered as he sipped his amazingly good wine (there were times when it was merely folly to object to the King's extravagance) whether the boy were nervous at having to sing in front of this large gathering. Children didn't seem to mind that sort of thing much—they were not self-conscious he supposed. Edward, now, looked most uncomfortable and he only had to accompany Dick on the flute: nobody would notice him and yet he seemed much more nervous than his brother. He sat on the steps leading up to the dais where they were all sitting, his head bent and his olive cheeks flushed, while Dick, a calm, almost heroic, little figure, stood beside him waiting to sing. Edmund glanced at the King but he was talking to the Countess of Exeter; then at John of Gaunt but he was amusing the Queen. Why were not the eyes of all the company upon his boys?

He frowned instructions to Edward: "Begin to play and they'll stop talking." But Edward wouldn't look up and the unhappy father wondered if the song would ever be sung. At last Dick caught his frantic eye and bent down to his brother with a broad grin. Then Edward started.

*Je ne scay comment je dure,*
*Car mon dolent cuer font d'yre*
*Et plaindre n'oze, ne dire*
*Ma douleureuse avanture.*

Richard sat listening enchanted. It seemed to him at the first notes of the flute that suddenly to a world where you talked for the sake of talking, ate because food was there, drank because they passed you the cup, something very pure and spiritual had stolen in. Then as the song went on of the lovesick amant and his cruel lady, he forgot to listen to the words but his mind fled away with the music. He heard Robert playing to him in the moonlit gardens of Windsor, and the sad little flute (was it Robert's or Edward's?) seemed to call out of him a great and terrible yearning. The memory of a hunt long buried in the past floated back to him : Robert riding out of the wood with the sun making chequered patterns on his sleeve, Henry feverishly trying to control an over-excited horse and Robert raising one superbly contemptuous eyebrow, the stag darting away over the meadows and Robert's high-pitched voice crying out: "How more than beautiful! Let us attempt to be merciful!"

*Et me fault par couverture,*
*Chanter quant mon cuer soupire,*
*Et faire semblant de rire;*
*Mais Dieux scait ce que j'endure.*
*Je ne scay comment je dure.*

The song stopped. Richard felt rudely cut off from his dream and suddenly furiously angry with the people who were asking each other if it were not just too perfect. Then he saw the troubled eyes of his uncle of York who thought he was scowling because he hadn't enjoyed the song. He laughed.

"Will you please sing again?" he called out and Edmund was satisfied.

But this time he would try not to let his mind wander off. It was dreadful how sentimental music made you. But Dick was singing a much gayer song about birds, flowers, and the springtime—Christine de Pisan again but in lighter, happier vein. His eyes fell upon Ann sitting in her chair in her formal upright way, her hands in her lap and her face turned towards the singer. He could see her straight, serious profile very clearly silhouetted in the torchlight against the pale green dress of Lady Exeter—that straight serious profile behind which her clear logical mind and her shy, delicate, humorous spirit lived so harmoniously together.

*Princes d'amours, ou bontez sont encloses,*
*Ce mois de may, portez les doulces fleurs,*
*Chapiaulx jolis, violettes et roses,*
*Fleurs de printemps, muguet et fleur d'amours.*

Suddenly Ann turned her head and looked at him. Perhaps she had felt him looking at her. And all the vague fruitless longings that the music had stirred in him went out to her when their eyes met. Dear Ann; he loved her more every day.

## CHAPTER II

### I

"*Ricardus Rex Angliæ et Franciæ et Dominus Hiberniæ Archiepiscopis, Episcopis, Abbatibus, Prioribus . . .*" On went the voice of the chancery clerk in its monotonous singsong Latin till Richard was nearly lulled to sleep. To keep himself awake he began to study the familiar faces of these same archbishops, bishops, abbots and priors who were so amicably assenting to the raising of his young cousin Edward to the earldom of Rutland. Archbishop Arundel's eyes were comfortably closed—it was so like an Arundel to be open about his boredom; Abbot Colchester of Westminster was handing something he had been writing to the Abbot of St. Alban's. It was evidently something amusing as they were both biting their lips and looking exceptionally grave. He looked across at the secular lords, and noticed a little maliciously that the Duke of Gloucester was already finding that a woolsack has some serious drawbacks as a seat. He felt almost glad that there was still a lot more of the preamble yet to come, and leant against the solid back of his own throne with ostentatious enjoyment.

"*Sciatis quod cum decus Principum et Sublimium consistat in multitudine subdidorum, et eo*

*magis regale plures sibi subsint nobiles Status et Eminentie celciores. . . .*"

Richard's eyes had left Thomas of Woodstock for Edmund of Langley, who was leaning forward, his chin on his hand. He kept restlessly stroking his beard and listening to every word of the flow of ornate and meaningless verbiage as eagerly as if the King were really paying compliments to his son. Richard grinned into the privacy of his ermine collar and his eyes swept on.

A pale, nervous boy, his skin a shade too dark for his very fair hair, looking steadily at the ground in front of him; this with taut mouth and stooping shoulders was the new Earl of Rutland. He was standing at Richard's right hand waiting to do homage for his estates, and Richard had hardly noticed him before. He turned to him now, suddenly interested.

"*Nos considerantes probitatem strenuam et geminatam Morum et Generis claritatem carissimi Consanguinei nostri Edwardi. . . .*" That was a good phrase, "the twofold distinction of character and birth." He wondered which of the clerks had thought of it. But Edward's nose and upper lip were twitching in evident discomfort, and he rubbed them with his finger. Richard supposed it was a nervous trick, and watched him sympathetically while he moved his head from side to side and continued almost frantically to scratch his nose. He was evidently seriously embarrassed. And then as Richard was beginning to realise that it was more

than ordinary shyness and self-consciousness, Edward of Langley, first Earl of Rutland, lifted his head and gave vent to a loud satisfying sniff.

He was so near Richard that nobody saw the finish of the comedy. A very slight movement—the King constantly moved restlessly on his throne—and Edward felt between his fingers a large, soft, exquisitely-scented handkerchief. He looked up quickly and saw his cousin staring at the clerk who was reading the document which gave him his title, with an air of extreme interest. Then he turned his head and their eyes met. Richard looked very much amused.

He was more sure of himself at the banquet for he felt that there was now a bond between him and the King. He and his uncle of Lancaster—created Duke of Aquitaine the same day—were the honoured guests, and surely there was never a more charming host. Richard was very friendly and cousinly—almost brotherly—and he seemed just the person with whom Edward felt at his best. When the dancing was beginning, he took Edward's arm and led him to a window.

"It's very wrong," he said, "that we should have seen so little of each other. I remember knighting you when you were seven, and noticing with enormous joy that you were smaller than me. You must have been the only person who was. Henry—curse him—was always taller. But I don't remember ever seeing you since till last Christmas."

"I think I was carefully kept away," said Edward

with an ease and confidence Richard's friendliness drew from him; "the establishment of our uncle of Gloucester was considered more wholesome I believe."

And Richard's laugh had in it an intimate note which suggested that in sharing the same opinion of Thomas of Woodstock they would have many other things in common.

II

This young cousin of his kept putting him in mind of Robert de Vere. Of course they were not in the least alike, but they had the same audacious tongue and rather the same way of talking. And they found the same things funny, had the same mildly astonished attitude to those who excelled at hearty outdoor exercises. Edward's presence reminded him continually of Robert's absence; but at the same time he was not always sure that he wanted him back, and perhaps, after what he had said that dreadful day at Windsor, Robert wouldn't care to come. He never could remember his actual words, but Anne told him she had seen Robert afterwards (he had come to ask her leave to take Agnes to France with him) and she had said that Robert was white with rage. He had controlled himself in her presence but she gathered that he had said some bitter things to Agnes. And after all, Richard would ask himself with heat, what busi-

ness had Robert to be angry when he had apparently run away like a girl at the first attacks of Henry's archers? He would work himself up into such a fever of rage against Robert that he was almost glad to think that a sentence of banishment had been passed upon him. He, Richard, had done his bit by making it possible for him to leave England without being arrested, and Robert could scarcely expect him to exert himself further. But argue as he might, he still had an uncomfortable feeling (especially when he was awake in the night) that he might have done more. And then, at times, so obsessed was he with the past, he would imagine that every wandering minstrel who came to Court was Robert in disguise—Robert who could not rest until he had obtained his forgiveness. . . . But of course Robert never came.

Young Edward of Rutland certainly opened old wounds, but at the same time he made up for Richard a little of what he had lost. He was always there, ready to amuse and to be amused, and being younger than Richard instead of older was in some ways more satisfactory as a companion than Robert had been. He seemed softer, more sensitive and affectionate than Robert, and inclined to rely on Richard for advice and support—which Robert never had done. He seldom made up his mind about anything and it amused Richard to make it up for him. Perhaps if Robert did come back, it would be difficult to cope with both of them at once.

One thing worried him, and that was that Ann

didn't care for Edward. And she often reproached him for not doing more about Robert. It was she who finally drove him to make an attempt to nullify Robert's banishment in the spring of 1392.

But he was soon to realise that though he was King *de facto,* he could not yet act against the wishes of his council nor prevent the obvious people from sitting in it. Both Gloucester and Arundel were members of it, and except for his desire to send for Robert, he didn't mind them there at all. In fact it was rather a triumph when the agenda was the peace treaty, for they could not afford to oppose John of Gaunt; and he thought it a sweeter revenge to force his enemies to be civil to him than to disgrace or impoverish them, or to cut off their heads. But when he suggested the recall of Robert and of Michael de la Pole, even his uncle of Lancaster seriously advised him to wait. "The point is, my dear Richard," he said, "they've thoroughly ground it into the heads of the imbecile Commons that those particular five were traitors. And we've simply got to consider the Commons these days. They are suspicious of both you and me at present and we've got to be very careful what we do. We'll never get the peace through if we upset them just now."

It was what his mother used to tell him. Always you must consider the Commons. "It's the most wicked thing," he burst out, "that so much power should be in the hands of such stupid people just because there are a lot of them. It simply tempts

any political party to tell them lies. And we who really know what's best for the country must go to work secretly and pretend we're doing something else. But really, separately, they are quite sound sensible men, only they don't know, they can't know, who's speaking the truth when the King's Council comes to blows."

"Which proves my point," said John, "that the King's Council should avoid coming to blows whenever possible."

## III

They were sitting in the garden at Sheen one blazing day in August, when a message came that the Dowager Countess of Oxford humbly requested an audience with the King in private and as soon as it was convenient. Richard, sleepily surveying the dazzling river, felt that it would not be convenient for a very long time.

Edward had been playing softly on his flute; he was sitting on the grass at the Queen's feet. Lady Exeter and William Scrope were idly sparring about universals—a subject which neither of them knew anything about. Ann was talking about roses to the monk, Thomas Merke: and he did know something about roses.

"What do you think Lady Oxford wants?" Richard said lazily. "She must have come up from Hedingham very early this morning."

Edward suggested that she might have come to beg him to revoke the act which banished her son, the Duke of Ireland.

Richard frowned. " She must realise that I can't. Of course I would if I could. But what on earth am I to say to her?" His eyes rested on Edward.

" Just go in and tell her that I have fallen into the river, will you?" he said to the page, " and that my life is despaired of."

The boy made no movement. He only smiled.

" Why should I see Lady Oxford if I don't want to?" Richard persisted, though nobody was suggesting that he should. Lady Exeter began to laugh.

" Tell her," she said with her eyes closed, " that she may not be admitted into the King's presence until she has discovered the name of the only woman Robert never loved."

" That's too easy," protested William who always listened to the chatter of Lady Exeter and found it worth answering, though nobody else did. " It was obviously his first wife. Give her some deep metaphysical problem."

Richard observed that they were all a great deal of use to him and still sat on, his arms behind his head, staring at the river. But as they most philosophically continued their interrupted conversation he soon got up and went indoors. He went slowly, making savage snatches at the leaves of bushes as he passed and tearing them to pieces.

He found the Countess sitting up very stiffly in the room where she had waited his pleasure. She

rose as he came in, and as she bowed over his hand, he noticed that the top of her head and forehead under the horned headdress were something like Robert's.

"I am afraid I am intruding unnecessarily, my lord," she said, "but I wanted to be the first to tell you the news I heard last night."

Richard's heart began to thump. He could tell from her manner that it was bad news.

"If you have never forgiven my son and still think of him as a coward and a traitor," she continued, "then it is unpardonable of me to come. But as I heard that you had already suggested to the Council that he should be recalled, I ventured to hope that you had forgiven him."

How could he tell Robert's mother his endless doubts and fluctuations, his longing for Robert and his horror at the thought of seeing him again? Indeed, with her standing in front of him with her head bowed, he forgot everything in a desire to reassure her of his love for her son. The Countess was still a very beautiful woman.

"Oh, madam," he said, "of course I have forgiven him with all my heart. In fact it is I who should be on my knees to him. But you must sit down, you're tired," and he led her by the hand to a seat.

She sat down mechanically, her mind on his answer. "Thank God for that," she said and twisted her fingers; "for I heard last night that he was dead."

When he could bear it she told him that he had been killed boar hunting in a forest near Louvain and had died in great agony. He had been trampled on and badly gored by the brute's tusks. He had lived for about twenty-four hours afterwards. "So," she added, "he did not die unshriven." A knight who had been present at his death brought her the news. "And he has a message for you," she told him. "He is here waiting to see you."

In spite of the heat of the day, Richard felt intensely cold and numb. He was leaning forward on the settle, his chin digging into the palms of his hands and his elbows digging into his knees. To his surprise he found that his legs were shaking visibly: he moved them but they still shook. And Maud de Vere, if she had had any doubts that the King loved her son, found them set at rest now. This was her moment: it was to see his grief that she had come.

"Yes, I should like to see the man," Richard said at last in an utterly dead voice. "But you want rest and something to eat." He called for a page. "It is most kind of you to have come all this way so that we can share our sorrow together." He smiled shakily at her and then looked away. She bowed and left the room.

It was Peter Felton, one of the knights banished with the Duke, who had broken his exile to bring Robert's last message to his mother and to the King. Richard remembered him well. He said that his lord had asked him to give the King his

ring and to assure him of his very dear love.

"Was that all he said?" Richard asked, passing the ring swiftly to and fro between his hands.

"He said could I manage to tell you the true facts of his inglorious campaign as he had an idea you had been misinformed. Would I try to impress upon you that it was not cowardice that made him run away, but he was ready to believe that it was an error of judgment."

"Those were his very words?"

"Yes, sire."

It was so like Robert in the midst of frightful agony to think out a sentence like that. He could see his face as he did it—a pale face with eyes shut, twitching with both pain and amusement as he half whispered the words "my inglorious campaign."

"Well, don't tell me about it now," he said, turning away his head. "Tell me, did he die in the faith of the Church?"

"I have kept it from the Countess," Felton confided, "but he wouldn't answer when the priest begged him to confess his sins. And he wouldn't look upon the Sacred Host. He died as he had lived."

Richard gave a sigh of relief. He was glad that Robert had had the courage to believe in his unbelief to the end. But he realised, too, that it was necessary for Robert's friends to pray all the more fervently for his soul.

## CHAPTER III

### I

Richard often wondered whether it was worth while to go on with this crusade of peace now Robert was dead. They had planned it together; they had tried to fight for it together; they had laughed together at the stupidity and selfishness of the men who posed as the people's friends. But now what did it matter, since Robert had been gored to death by a boar in Flanders and could never come back to share his triumph? But Ann held Richard to his purpose: was it for Robert's sake, she asked, that he had wanted peace; did he quarrel with his uncles, sacrifice Sir Simon Burley and the rest, even offer Calais to the King of France, simply to please Robert? Ann was always merciless when the Broomscod Collar was at stake.

But when Arundel made no attempt to put down a rebellion which broke out in Cheshire against the King's yeomen while he was at his manor of Holt—in fact it was more than probable that he had encouraged the rebels—and when he attacked John of Gaunt in parliament for no other crime than that of walking arm in arm with the King in public, Richard was stung out of his lethargy and took up the cause with fresh vigour. He began, too, to rely

for advice and counsel upon Chancery clerks who knew their job rather than upon the nobility; and often the Council discussed terms of peace when the more aristocratic of its members were not present. Richard saw that this was the only way to prevent Arundel and his party from upsetting his plans; and he saw also that it was the only way to get efficient government. He sometimes sat up in bed in the middle of the night to assure a sleepy and perfectly acquiescent Ann that she must have experts to govern a kingdom, and that she must not allow the fruits of years of thought and experience to be overthrown by people who didn't know what they were talking about. "This war, for instance," he would say; "Gloucester and Arundel only want it for what they can get out of it. They haven't had to go on scraping up money by the most humiliating means so that the ordinary routine of business can go on. They never think when they ask for money to equip their armies that we've got to get it from somewhere else to pay our clerks."

And Ann, if she were sufficiently wide awake, would lie contemplating her husband in the dim glow of the night-light with affectionate amusement; he was generally huddled up in an eager heap, his chin on his knees and his face puckered with earnestness. And although she longed above all things to see England and France at peace, she often found herself in the unfortunate position of being able to see both sides; and she couldn't help sometimes reminding Richard that his enemies had reason to

suggest that the clerks might be paid with the money he spent on clothes, on banquets, on pictures and on books. And she always enjoyed it when he rose to her bait and cried out furiously that he was encouraging art and civilised living instead of leading people on to turn themselves into beasts. Once he caught her laughing at him and began to laugh himself. "You horrible person, how I loathe you," he said, and found it necessary to kiss her.

Sometimes he felt surprised that everyone was just the same: John of Gaunt as amusing and as calm, Edmund of Langley as wavering and as lazy, Gloucester and Arundel as jealous and as rude. He could still find something of what he missed in the society of Edward of Rutland, and John Montague had never altered in his attitude towards him although John had been Robert's oldest friend. And Ann was just the same, too—only every day he wanted her more and more. But it was odd that people went on being themselves even when Robert was dead: it was even odd that the very fields, houses and churches hadn't somehow changed. But he knew that he himself was different: he was no child playing a game, he was a man who had misjudged and insulted his best friend, and life could never be quite the same for him.

* * * * *

When the Duke of Lancaster came back from France in May, 1394, he brought with him the news

of a four years' truce and the prospects of a lasting peace. The question of paying homage to Charles for Aquitaine was still unsolved but the French government seemed more ready than they had ever been to come to some sort of a compromise. Meanwhile, to show his goodwill, Charles had sent gifts to the King of England and his uncles, and amongst them there was for each royal prince a handsomely jewelled collar bearing the French King's broomscods. But Richard's was more splendid than any of the others, and woven into the pattern in letters of gold was the French word *James* (For Ever), ten times repeated.

He sat for a long time staring at nothing with the collar in his hand. The smaller, less splendid one was still round his neck, but concealed under his clothes like a hair shirt.

"We'll have a broomscod party," said the King suddenly shouting with laughter. "Everyone must come wearing broomscods. I shall enjoy asking Arundel."

Invitations were then sent out for a great banquet and tournament. All the ladies of the Court began to design dresses on which broom plants were to be embroidered, and the Court dressmakers showed a marvellous ingenuity in devising different variations of the same pattern. The Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths brought out every sort and kind of comb, pin, brooch or ear-ring; every plate or cup used at the banquet must have the same emblem inlaid in enamel; and every tent and marquee was

to be hung with gold embroidered again with broomscods.

The morning of the great day was sunny and warm, although the sky had been unsettled the night before and there had been great anxiety about the weather. Now it seemed as if nothing could mar the festivities. The cloudy faces of Gloucester and Arundel only served to increase Richard's mirth and good spirits, and when the wine and sweets were passed round during the tournament, he kept on begging his uncle to drink out of his own cup.

The favourites among the competitors were Thomas Mowbray, Earl of Nottingham and Henry of Derby. Both of these young men had joined forces with Gloucester and Arundel in '87, but Richard could congratulate himself upon having broken up that combination. He had discovered as early as 1389 that Nottingham was quite a charming person in his slow deliberate way: he had thought him the ordinary type of humourless prig that called itself a knight of chivalry until that parliament in which the decision of the judges was overruled by the leaders of his party. On that day he had most surprisingly resisted them—not with words, for Thomas Mowbray was never garrulous—but with a sulky silence that alarmed them. His disapproval had won him the Constableship, and Richard's desire to give him further honours had occasioned a rift in the Council and the resignation of William of Wykeham from the office of Chancellor. Now the King

had few subjects more loyal than the Earl of Nottingham.

Henry of Derby was a more difficult person to deal with. It had been obvious from their earliest years that the King loathed him, so that any protestation of affection on Richard's part would look like hypocrisy. But with his father so intimate with the King he couldn't be regarded as an open enemy, and John of Gaunt had performed the miracle of weaning him from his uncle of Gloucester. All Richard could do was to encourage him to exercise his skill in warfare on the heathen who were plundering the eastern borders of Prussia.

Now he had come back, it was likely that he would be unrivalled in this tournament. He was a large powerfully built young man who had always applied himself seriously to the art of jousting as though it were one of the most important items in the business of life. Richard thought it would be very pleasant if he did win, as John of Gaunt would be pleased and he himself would have an opportunity of making compliments to Henry in public. All the same, he couldn't help hoping that Tom Mowbray would beat him: it would be such a blow to Henry's pride.

During the tournament the weather suddenly changed. The sun went in, and the spectators began to be aware of a cold wind biting through their summer clothes. They withdrew into the tents hastily, but not in all cases reluctantly, for really, they thought to themselves, you had more

chance to be amusing if you were not expected to follow the jousting as well as to make sparkling conversation. Some of the older men held out gallantly, but their faces were blue with cold, and a very small audience witnessed Nottingham's spectacular defeat of Henry of Derby.

The King and Queen were forced to emerge for the presentation of the prize. The royal seat was well exposed to the wind which blew Thomas Mowbray's hair into his eyes and mouth and showed no mercy to Ann in her thin dress; and the herald's proclamation went on and on and on. At last it was over and she was able to hand him the latest surprise of Richard's, a green sleeve richly embroidered with broomscods, but she was shivering so much that she could hardly smile at the winner of it. Frowning darkly, Arundel watched him fix it into his helmet and ride away.

"Oh dear," said Ann, standing in front of a large fire when they had all gone; "I thought I should never be warm again."

"It was cold, wasn't it?" Richard agreed absently, still thinking about Arundel's face, and that having lived to see this day, he had not lived in vain. "I was sorry in a way that Henry didn't win; Gaunt would have been so pleased. Did you notice the way Tom parried that last thrust of his?"

"I didn't notice anything," Ann said. "I never do take in what's happening at tournaments at any time, but I was too cold to-day even to try to."

Richard was faintly conscious in the midst of his

triumph that Ann was not sharing in it as wholeheartedly as he would have expected. But she looked warm enough now: her cheeks were crimson and her eyes brilliant like burning coals.

## II

Broom plants danced before Ann's hot eyes—flower, pod—flower, pod—in regular, never-ending succession. When she shut her eyes tight the flower grew monstrous and yellow, edged with green flame; sometimes the pod, bright red and streaked with blue, floated right through it. When she opened them and looked at the curtains of her bed, the very swans embroidered on them turned slowly but surely into broom plants.

Suddenly once through the broom, she saw Richard's face quite clearly, twisted as it always was when he was excited or upset about anything. She tried to ask him what was the matter, but before words came, a broomscod swam between them and blotted his face out.

Then she felt as if something very heavy had been placed between her breasts. It must be armour, she thought; they are dressing me for the tournament. But I can't bear it long, I'm not strong enough . . . There seemed to be no way of telling them to take it off her chest and she knew that she must do it herself. With a terrible effort she moved her arm and began to grope for the heavy weight, till her fingers

came into contact with something warm and familiar and friendly. It was Richard's hand.

She felt it all over. No broomscods could deprive her of her sense of touch nor take her away from Richard's hand. She felt for the curve of his palm and each separate finger and the ring he had worn since Robert's death. But in the effort blood rushed to her face; her own hand, back and breast became suddenly dripping wet, and she could hear her heart beating in her throat. Then the weight lifted, but Richard's hand was gone too.

Long, long afterwards, she heard somebody murmuring the words of the Communion Service, but a pain in her back which she vaguely felt had been there a long time, distracted her mind and she couldn't attend properly. Then it was time for her to go up to the altar, but the chapel was very dark and she couldn't see her way. A monk sprang out of the choirstalls and took her arm, and as she looked into his face she saw it was the painter Nicholas Cheriton, wearing a chain of broomscods round his neck. But he had been dead some years.

Nevertheless he held a silver crucifix in front of her eyes and she realised what was happening. She was being crucified and the pain in her back and side was where the spear had pierced her. The silver figure stretched out before her eyes became suddenly full of life and pain: He was her Lord and she was sharing His glory.

Then the room was full of angels, blue angels

with roses in their hair, taking her by the hands and feet and twining their arms round her aching back; and Mary above them more splendidly blue than they, was holding out the Child in His golden robe. She took Him in her own arms, pressing His little dark head into the curve of her neck, and her chin touched the short cropped hair. She knew now that He was her own Child, the Child for which she had prayed so long, and the pain she had borne was the pain of His birth.

* * * * *

Richard stood silently by the empty body hardly able to believe that the sigh Ann had just given was her last. Archbishop Courtenay, with the crucifix still in his hand, crossed himself and murmured a prayer. But Richard did not move until people came and bent over her, taking unheard-of liberties with the Queen's body. "Go away! Leave her!" he shouted, but his own voice raised in the quietness of the room suddenly shocked him and he rushed away.

He fled to his own bedroom, scattering as he passed a handful of scared little boys, and feeling nothing but a blind anger against the people who were touching the little still body that no longer belonged to him alone. He snatched his pillow from the bed and threw it violently across the room, then lay writhing on the mattress tearing convulsively at the sheets. Then he flung himself off the bed—it

was too soft and yielding for his present temper—and dashed his silver candlesticks on to the floor. Their crash upon the stones quietened him and he sank back again on to the bed, his head in his hands.

It was impossible that she was dead. All through her illness he had refused to believe that she could die, and would scarcely allow the doctors to hint at the possibility. But his will had been pitted against God and God had won; it was as if he had battered his head against a stone wall. It was not fair of God to take Ann in the midst of a triumph of which He must surely approve. Surely God looked with favour upon the Broomscod Collar.

He walked to the window and leaned out, filled with a sudden longing for air. All Surrey spread before him, its great shoulders of moor and pine smilingly welcoming the morning upon which Ann had died. There was the park where they had so often hunted; the river which every year uncurled in fresh loveliness in front of the royal barge. Ann had seen her first kingfisher at Sheen; and here, too, she had had her first view of a bank of willow herb shining in dark green water. Now the yellow irises were just coming out and she would never see them.

It was the most wonderful morning. Richard had not often caught the day so early. The muffled bells of Sheen Priory ringing for the first Mass told him how early it was—and also brought him to a sudden, startled realisation that to-day was the Feast of Pentecost. That was why the morning was so lovely: the Spirit of the Lord—so ran the Introit

—was filling the round orb of the earth. But the thought did not calm him: he only knew that on the morning that the Spirit should have filled the earth with life, He had suddenly deserted Ann.

All Sheen mocked at him: he would not rest until the palace was burnt to the ground.

## III

The country was undoubtedly heading towards ruin. So the Earl of Arundel decided as he knelt among his peers while the coffin of Queen Ann was carried slowly up the new nave of Westminster Abbey. You had only to compare the extravagant details of this funeral with the poorly equipped castles at Calais and at Brest, or the ill-fortified towns on the south coast left to the mercy of that puppy, Edward of Rutland. What had come over everybody that they should acquiesce to such madness? John of Gaunt was obviously in favour of peace for his own private ends, and to fill his already bulging purse the country was to be sacrificed. Thank God there were some disinterested men left who put the good of the country before their own private desires.

Yet curiously enough, when Arundel thought of the country, he did not see in front of him the long line of downs behind Arundel Castle, studded here and there with the rounded buttocks of a grazing sheep, nor even the flat water-meadows lying below

it golden with kingcups—but too boggy to be quarrelled over by go-ahead peasants who were busy enclosing and exchanging their strips. What he saw was an army riding through the valleys of Poitou and Gascony, ever victorious and ever chivalrous to well-born persons who chanced to become its prisoners. That the skyline was red with burning cornfields—or even with whole towns that had dared to shut their gates to the King of England—did not for one moment disturb the pleasure that Arundel got from his reflections upon the good old days of Edward the Third. And he could not find words to express his own contempt for the present King, and the pride that he took in being the only person who dared stand up to this fantastic boy who was trying to alter the universe. Even his brother the Archbishop of York had been won over by the delights of office (Richard in his bewildering friendliness had made him Chancellor of the Exchequer) and it was rumoured that the Duke of Gloucester was being bribed by his unscrupulous brother of Lancaster to keep his mouth shut in the Council Chamber. Gloucester's jealousy for his nephew had made him a useful ally once, but he was not reliable; he wasn't fighting for the principle of the thing and saw no point in sacrificing himself for England's honour. He himself stood alone in his protest against this selling of the kingdom to John of Gaunt; and soon he would show them all that when Richard of Arundel wished to leave the Abbey before the service was over, he would leave it

whether Richard of England wanted him to or not.

Time was getting on and he had arranged to start his journey to Cheshire that afternoon. There was still trouble up there: the King's yeomen were quarrelling with his villeins and the reeve of his manor of Holt had sent him anxious messages. He couldn't stop on his knees in Westminster Abbey all day when the White Harts were plundering his lands and killing his servants. Richard knew he was going early: he had only to catch his eye, bow and go out. If Richard refused to give the signal of permission, he would go just the same.

As for Richard, he was thinking then of the first time he saw Ann on horseback. She was sitting sideways on her queerly shaped saddle as if it were a chair. It was apparently the fashion in Bohemia for ladies to ride like that, but no one in England except Ann looked anything more than a sack of flour swung on to the horse. Ann had laughed at his astonished admiration, and had murmured that it was much more comfortable.

Then Arundel thrust his face forward, and Richard stared at him blankly. One of his knights tried to remind him of Arundel's letter asking for leave to go early and then he remembered how furious he had been when his secretary brought it to him.

If Arundel had looked either scornful or defiant, Richard might have laughed, as it generally amused him to find that people whom he despised despised him. But Arundel had placed over his features the

mulishly respectful expression he had worn when he and Gloucester had come to the Tower and threatened the King's deposition. Richard suddenly noticed the expression and at the same time he became aware of a heavy mace in the hand of an official near by.

A rushing tide of fury swept over him. That Arundel should dare to consider anything more urgent than the Queen's funeral; that after having arrived too late for the procession that had started from Sheen, he should dare to interrupt the service and stand in front of Richard in all his odious hypocritical humility; that Arundel, the man who had humiliated him so often should dare to insult him again! And all his love for Ann, his hatred for Arundel, all the conflicting and nameless emotions that had surged inside him not only since her death but since Robert's banishment, all these burst out in a huge uncheckable torrent . . . and Arundel rolled on the ground at his feet while the mace swung tempestuously in his hand. A tiny stream of blood crept out from under Arundel's head and ran along the cracks between the consecrated stones.

## IV

The sin was absolved and the penance done. Then came Arundel to the King's presence to ask for pardon—for the sake of appearances—for his rudeness. Yet it seemed to Richard as he raised his

enemy from his knees, that neither of them had had anything to do with the crimes for which they were asking mercy, Arundel of him and he of God. They were both puppets in the game which was being played out somewhere in heaven or in hell, and the rules of the game were that after any triumph of the Broomscod Collar, there must always follow disaster.

## CHAPTER IV

### I

*"We poor men, treasurers of Christ and His Apostles, denounce to the lords and the commons of parliament certain conclusions and truths for the reformation of the Holy Church of England, the which has been blind and leprous many years by maintenance of the proud prelacy, borne up with flattering of private religion the which is multiplied to a great charge and onerous to people here in England."*

It was on a large piece of parchment, written up in bold characters, and the conclusions and truths were added in a smaller hand underneath. It was nailed to the door of St. Paul's Cathedral.

A market woman who had crept in to say a prayer for the soul of her dead baby in the midst of her hard day's work, saw it as she came out and wondered what it was all about. But as she couldn't read, she could only admire the flourishing capitals and pass on. It was funny, she thought, how some people didn't seem to have enough to do.

Nobody else noticed it for some time. Then a friar came past and studied it carefully, blowing on his fingers, for the day was cold. "These fellows ought to be hanged," he murmured as he read some

insulting criticisms of the Four Mendicant Orders.

A little time afterwards four young men on horseback rode up to the church, dismounted and flung their reins to a servant. They were talking rather loudly.

"Purvey told my father he would put it up this morning. This must be it."

"Good Lord, I can't read all that."

"Oh, look here; if anyone can tell me what's in it in one sentence I'll swear by it with pleasure."

"I said all along that nobody would read it, and do you suppose anybody's passed by since it's been up who *can* read it? This appeal to the public is an utter farce."

The last speaker was Sir John Montague. He leant against the wall of the church and folded his arms. He had the half injured, half triumphant air of one who has been dragged to see some great sight against his will and has found the sight as insignificant as he dared hope.

With him was young Lewis Clifford, whose father was a vehement supporter of the Lollards, and two other young men. It was Clifford who had found the length of the document more than he could cope with.

"No, but seriously," he was replying to John Montague; "what else can we do if Parliament won't take action? We must appeal to public opinion somehow."

"I didn't like to say so to your father and Sir Richard Stury," said John, "but I don't think

we're going to gain by waiting till the King is out of England and there's only the sackheaded Duke of York left in charge. It's just the sort of thing that puts him into a passion. All his episcopal friends will be writing off to him exaggerating the enormity of our offences, and the Duke of Lancaster isn't here to put in a good word for us."

"I don't understand the King's attitude, I must say," observed one of the others. "Half the time he admits our position and the other half he goes to Mass. And *all* the time he goes on handing out more temporalities to the clergy."

"Perhaps this is hardly the place to discuss the King's religious principles," said John in chilling French, as two workmen came into the porch. "Well, we can tell Clifford and Stury that the Conclusions are up, any way, but as far as we can gather they have not been observed."

He rode away, bored with the morning's work. He resented anything spectacular, and felt quite sorry that he had definitely committed himself to membership of this absurd sect. Yet what they taught and preached was nearer, to his way of thinking, to the message of the Gospels than was the doctrine of the Church. Something had happened to the Church lately, he felt; she was not suited to the needs of this modern impatient age. . . . Meanwhile why bother, when London this cold morning was sparkling with frost and sunshine: when you breathed, you sent little puffs of vapour into the air. But damn it all, he reflected, staring at his own

breath, you might be nothing but a bloody censer after all. He groaned, shifting the reins into his right hand and beating his left against his thigh to get it warm.

At the west gate, he passed a girl selling apples. He bought one and ate it in front of her, looking with a poet's eye at her hard brown face and scantily covered breast. "Aren't you cold?" he asked her and she laughed.

"Don't seem to notice it, sir," she said; "'tis always cold."

"Well, give me a kiss then. I've paid you much more than you deserve for the apple. Look, there's a maggot in it." He kissed her as their heads came together over the apple. "Why don't you wash, you horrible child?" he complained, wiping his mouth with his handkerchief. "The river's not frozen over yet."

He rode on to Westminster in better humour. But he was still annoyed with the Lollards. It was plainly ridiculous to muddle children like that with theological controversies when they were quite happy with the religion they had. Much better to make love to them and give them money . . . He frowned at the palace appearing over the whitened trees with all its windows picked out in silver, and was reminded of its owner away in Ireland. How Richard would loathe that fatuous document pinned to the door of St. Paul's; it was a good thing he was not there to see it. Anyway, he had not missed much by being out of England this winter, for the

frost had stopped all hunting and there was nothing to do except to quarrel about religion. John wished he could have gone with him to Ireland, for certainly things were very dull without him. You felt that there wasn't a person worth talking to after you had lived in his society for long: nobody seized at life so wholeheartedly, wrung so much out of it, and looked so exquisite as he did it as Richard of England. His whole existence was a blazing pageant or perhaps some hauntingly lovely poem. There was never anybody with so much enthusiasm and energy coupled with so much grace and humour: usually if you were energetic you had no humour—like Henry of Derby; and if you were lucky enough to have charm, looks and a ready wit, you were probably lethargic—like Robert de Vere.

## II

John Montague was right in assuming that the Bishops would write letters of complaint to the King. And he was not surprised to hear that Richard was returning from Ireland in May, red hot against Lollardy. The Court had been accused of heresy in the past, but it could never be accused again. Every notable Lollard who valued his position hastily recanted. Poor Richard Stury never forgave himself for his cowardly refusal of a martyr's crown. But John guessed that what had chiefly roused the King was the plea that this heresy had

been patronised by Ann, although the Lollards had waited for her death before making their big manifesto. It seemed that nothing could surpass the foolishness of these people with whom he had thrown in his lot, except his own for doing so.

But Richard was very lenient with him. He sent for him soon after his return, but it was not a formal interview, and Lollardy was only mentioned by the way. He told him that he was making arrangements for Robert's body to be sent back to England to be buried at Earls Colne with the rest of his family; he thought he had enough power and popularity now to give him an honourable funeral. "Anyway I'll take the risk," he said; "I owe it to him."

John looked round the room. It was full of old associations: the carved settle sent him back to a time when Robert had lain among the crimson cushions, gazing up at the painted ceiling and murmuring stanzas from *Troilus and Criseyde*. The glimpse of the lawn below, that you got from the little window beyond Richard's head, reminded him of a very small golden-haired King that he had once seen from that window, seriously practising Robert's peculiar walk. Robert himself had been up in the window with him, and they had laughed at the scene together.

"I can hardly believe," he said stupidly, "that he's dead."

"I can hardly believe that I'm alive," said Richard, looking out of the window, but not to chase old memories. He felt he could talk about Robert

more easily if he were not looking at John. His eyes were still on the garden when he suddenly remarked a little indistinctly, his hand over his mouth, that he hoped John wasn't mixed up in all that Lollard business, because he didn't want to lose all his friends.

"Well, I suppose I was," John admitted; "at least I signed the petition sent up to Parliament in January, but I did try to keep the most extreme views out of it. Purvey's disendowment scheme for instance."

"Now that I must admit I enjoyed reading," said Richard turning round and laughing. "'Our Lord, the King'—how does it go?—'may have of the temporalities occupied by bishops, abbots and priors and wasted proudly within the realm, 15 earls, 1,500 knights, 6,200 squires and 100 houses of alms more than he has now.' It seems an excellent idea."

"You know, that man's really quite a sound scholar," John apologised; "but as soon as he meddles with finance he makes the most astounding fool of himself."

"That's my quarrel with the whole lot of you, Lollardy's all very well as a sort of intellectual exercise, but as soon as you try and put your ideas into practice, you reduce the whole thing to absurdity."

Seeing that Richard was in the mood for a friendly argument, John settled down to enjoy himself. "Now you're making sweeping generalisations. There's no need to assume just because Purvey works out a fantastic scheme for the expenditure of

the money taken from the Church that it isn't practical to disendow the Church."

"Well, is it?" Richard asked dryly.

"Why not? If you believe as I do that the great wealth of the Church is making it harder and not easier for priests and bishops to do their job, then it isn't practical to permit such a state of things to exist."

"Yes, but meanwhile are we to expect the clergy to commit financial suicide? For they are the only governing body with power to disendow the Church."

"But that's why it's all so wrong. It's the lay authority that should do it and if we get public opinion behind us the lay authority will do it. After all the people are the ultimate sovereigns." And he quoted Justinian.

"The point is that you'll never get public opinion behind you unless you destroy the people's faith not only in the priests but in the Church. Do you think the uneducated man can distinguish between the temporal and spiritual power of the priest? As soon as you destroy one you destroy the other, and the people's belief in the sacraments of the Church will go too. Are you prepared to go as far as that?"

John was silent, remembering his own feelings when the Lollards did try to interfere with the religion of the poor. But Richard hardly noticed he had scored a point: he swept on, warming to his subject, to something nearer his heart.

"Of course," he said, "I grant you the right of

the secular power to control the spiritual in certain cases. I am the first to maintain that the practice of taking appeals to Rome, for instance, is prejudicial to my regality. But I honestly do think this idea of disendowment is not only wrong, but completely unpractical. If you did deprive the Church of her wealth, in a very few years she will have got it back again. Rich people will always leave money and lands to religious communities with instructions to say masses for their souls—and even if you've done away with the regulars as you seem to want to, there will always be the parish church to pray for the souls of sinners. And as for disendowing the bishops, how do you imagine a bishop's going to keep up the staff he must have for his ordinary administrative work? I'm not sure that the man in the street isn't right. You simply can't separate the temporal from the spiritual power of the priest."

He was quite unable to keep still as he talked, and his words came out with the rapidity and force of a passionate excitement. But Richard always turned John into a very sober, reasonable being, so he was not swept off his feet. He spoke very calmly and slowly as if to heighten the contrast between the fiery orator and the unemotional thinker. "Haven't we rather overemphasised the spiritual power of the priest in the past? All very well for an uncivilised people, but nowadays can one really swallow that jargon about confession and penance and all the rest of it? After all, should a priest

really come between God and an individual soul?"

Richard winced perceptibly. He had taken his penance for the pollution of Westminster Abbey very seriously, and didn't like to think he was uncivilised. Then he laughed, wringing horrified hands. "Don't you torture my ears with your appalling, decadent anti-sacerdotalism," he exclaimed. "If you won't grant me that the priests have spiritual power, you're only fit for the Inquisition. But do keep your views quiet, my dear fellow," he suddenly added. "I repeat, I don't want to lose all my friends."

John assured him that he would. But he hadn't finished yet. "You talk to me about anti-sacerdotalism, you young hypocrite," he accused him, laughing, "and look at you. Paying your secretaries and doctors with bishoprics, drawing up statutes to undermine the authority of the Pope: and then you go off regularly to Mass and call yourself the scourge of heretics. I suppose you call that piety."

"Oh, Lord, no. I don't call it anything. I don't know what I believe, really." He put his hand over his forehead. "I suppose I'm about as thoroughgoing a sceptic as Robert was at heart, only I simply haven't the courage to let anything go." He paused and stared at John with a frown, rubbing his chin. "And oddly enough I've got a most profound horror of heretics."

John smiled. He was thinking how puzzled would be the youth who had confessed that he didn't understand the King's religious principles, if he knew that

Richard would give anything to understand them himself.

He thought it over when John had gone. Was he a sceptic? He didn't know. He only knew that John was wrong. If individual souls were left to find their own way to God—and as he hunted for words to express his deep distrust for such a state of things, he was reminded of a story he had learnt in the schoolroom, of the limbs of a man rebelling against the stomach. These people who thought themselves advanced forgot the essential truth of that story; they wanted to destroy the mystical Body of the Church without realising that it was themselves that they were destroying. He would rather jeopardise his soul by making bishops of men who would use their power in his service than commit the far graver sin of taking that power away from them. It was, on the face of it, an absurd position, and the Lollards were far too much blinded by their own logic to see it, but he was convinced that it was the right one. There could be only one authority in the state and that was the authority of the King: but the Church would collapse like a house of cards if you admitted that openly. There was only one way out and that was the way of compromise: leave the Church with all her power, but let there be complete understanding between the men who held it and the King.

He longed to discuss it with Ann, for she surely would find something to defend the position which would be more likely to appeal to the Lollard mind.

He wished he had followed with more attention those discussions she used to have with John. But in those days he hadn't cared so much himself, and had made no attempt to persecute Robert who was the greatest heretic of all.

The thought of Robert and Ann made him forget his religious difficulties and live again in the past. Huddling over the fire, he gave himself up to gloom and depression, and the Abbey bell ringing for Vespers seemed to catch his melancholy into its chimes. He would have gone to the service, in fact he was getting up for the purpose when he remembered with a sudden pang why it was that nowadays he so seldom went to the Abbey. For although all traces of his sin had been carefully washed away, he never sat in the royal seat without expecting to see the cracks between the stones grow suddenly red with Arundel's blood.

He pulled the Broomscod Collar off his neck. The sense of his own powerlessness against destiny had come over him again. He swore darkly at the lovely thing: he was not going to be a pawn in its game a moment longer, and it gave him a great deal of pleasure to crush it in his hands and utter the most frightful blasphemies. He stopped at nothing: St. Edward wasn't spared nor Our Lady, nor the Wounds of God Himself. The broom had brought him nothing but bad luck: to show he was through with it he would lead an army into France to-morrow. Enough pretext could be found in the trouble his uncle of Lancaster was

having amongst the Gascons in Aquitaine.

He got up suddenly. He was a fool. Never had there been a better prospect of making peace than now. John of Gaunt had somehow silenced Gloucester; Thomas Arundel was happy with the Chancellorship and the Archbishopric of York; the rest of the nobility, Salisbury, Stafford, Northumberland, Cobham, were all on his side; the Mowbrays, the Dispensers, the Hollands and the Scropes were among his personal friends. The clergy adored him: even the Archbishop of Canterbury had begun to think that good might have come from the womb of the Princess of Wales when he began his crusade against the Lollards. The wealth of Lancaster and York was at his disposal, and Henry of Derby was not likely to risk the Bohun fortune in a cause that did not win the approval of his father. Henry always knew which side his bread was buttered. And the Irish expedition had gone as well as could be expected: he was not such a fool as to imagine that a barbarian like Art Macmurragh could be trusted to keep his word, but at least the man had been impressed by the courtesy and good manners of the English Court. Richard had not been above treating these Irish chieftains—kings they called themselves—as his equals, which seemed to surprise them: he had knighted them and had invited them to a magnificent banquet in Dublin . . . He stopped in the act of stretching himself and looked up at his clenched fists. This was the way the men of the new generation ended their quarrels, he thought,

and laughed exultantly, locking his fingers together above his head. He had brought culture and civilisation to these savages and had shown them what beauty was—beauty of furred silk patterned with heraldic badges, of gold and silver plate and shimmering fruit in torchlight. He had taught them over his jewelled goblet that wine and laughter were better things than blood and tears . . . He pressed his forehead with his clasped hands, then held them away from him, staring at them absently. Robert's ring, sliding up and down his finger, caught his eye and he smiled. He was still glad, in spite of his loneliness, to be alive.

III

The coffin was lying in the room where Robert was born. The candles stood round it like sentinels—but owlish sentinels without hearts—and the air was heavy with the smell of rosemary, yew and cypress wood. It had been opened at the King's orders, but only workmen had yet looked upon the embalmed body.

Richard stood on the threshold of the room leaning rather heavily on John's arm. "Am I being unduly morbid?" he murmured and hung back. Then he released the friendly arm and strode frowning towards the row of candles.

His first shock was to find Robert's long white hands placed stiffly together in an attitude of

prayer. They hardly seemed to be the same hands. He felt a little sick and leant against the bed for support, while John tiptoed in after him and bent over the coffin. Desperately he looked at John and not at Robert.

He had polluted Westminster Abbey with Arundel's blood; he had organised a tournament which sent Ann to her death; he had allowed Robert to be trampled on by a boar in Flanders. And all this for the sake of a dream which Robert had given him. It was not extraordinary that he should wonder whether it was worth while. And yet supposing he gave it up now, Robert's sacrifice would have been in vain; and after all, it was Robert's dream too. Would he rest in his grave if England still took armies into France just because Richard had grown weary of the insults and intrigues of the Earl of Arundel? For that was all that it was really, this absurd feeling of his that the Broomscod Collar was ruling his destiny. He looked at Robert again.

This time he made himself look at Robert's face. Except for an ugly mark where the boar had kicked him on the corner of his mouth, he looked very much the same as usual. The candles shed a light over his face which disguised its unnatural pallor, and it was often as calm and as still as that. The only unreality was the pious position of his hands. It was difficult to believe that he would not soon open his eyes and make some mocking observation about his own funeral.

He was in full armour and his shield lay buried

with him. It was another shock to meet a large blue boar on the shield when it was a boar that had killed him. But twining triumphantly round it on a golden scroll was the de Vere motto: *Vero nil verius.*

Yes; in spite of his mockery of chivalry and of the bombastic symbolism of heraldry, that motto had been the text of Robert's life. It was only his dread of cant and insincerity that had driven him to take refuge behind the armour of a *poseur.* He had loved Agnes because she had not attempted to cultivate the art of modest womanliness; he had loved Richard because he always went directly to his object without caring what other people thought. For Robert there could be nothing truer than truth.

## CHAPTER V

### I

In the eyes of Arundel the country went from bad to worse. In two years, the truce became a peace and the outlook for the war party was black. Indeed, though a certain amount of sympathy had been shown for Arundel, only he and the Earl of Warwick could count themselves the Opposition. His chances of distinguishing himself in battle grew every day fainter, and never again would he hear the people shouting as they had in '87, when he rode through London after his naval victory off Brest. Not even stains of blood in Westminster Abbey had been able to break the spell the King cast upon everyone—everyone at least but an Arundel.

At precisely this time of year, ten years ago, they had all met at Arundel to settle this pro-French question once and for all. But in spite of their seeming success, Richard had got his way, and now was not only throwing away all his rich inheritance but was making it impossible for later generations to revoke the terms of peace. For he was going to marry Princess Isabel, the daughter of the French King, and the child of such a marriage, French though he was, would have to give up all claim to his maternal grandfather's throne.

Arundel thought gloomily of the party of men he had entertained ten years ago. There was young Henry of Derby, now completely controlled by his father; there was Thomas of Woodstock—yes, there was more hope of getting *him* back. He had already begun to grumble at the proposed surrender of Cherbourg and Brest, and if the King and Lancaster were to bribe him, there was enough money at Arundel to outbid them. Then there was his brother Thomas Arundel; and Richard Arundel, considering him, frowned. He knew better than anyone that you could not trust Thomas an inch; at the moment he was piously loyal for he had just been offered the Primateship. But the Earl also knew that Thomas loved power more than money, and Richard would not trust him with much though he was Archbishop of Canterbury. It was possible that he would soon give up these protestations of loyalty and throw himself into any scheme to check the royal prerogative.

Richard Arundel passed on to consider more reliable allies. There was of course poor stupid faithful Warwick; but except for him Arundel must seek elsewhere than among the aristocracy. His one rock was the city of London, his one weapon his skill in handling the Commons in parliament. Also he had one very real grievance—the despotism of the King's Council. It was this body of men—a handful of chamber knights and chancery clerks—who, with the aid of the Duke of Lancaster, were really carrying through the peace; and they might

protest as they liked in parliament but it was carried through just the same. There was only one way to control the King and to save the country and they had discovered it in '86: a commission of lords must choose his councillors for him.

And Arundel, staring furiously at his nails, thought out how it could be done. The King must be attacked through his household: the Commons always enjoyed any opportunity to complain of his extravagance. He was having a portrait painted of himself even now to send to the French Court: the country would have to pay for it, and what good did it do them to have the palace littered with portraits of King Richard? What would future generations have to thank them for, if all King Edward's hard-won possessions in France were given up without a struggle, and there was nothing to hand down to posterity but one or two simpering portraits? He glared southwards out of the window towards the sea and wished that it would sink the royal fleet that was now sailing to Calais.

Richard of course was thoroughly pleased with himself. The objections of his uncle of Gloucester had been neatly silenced by the promise of an earldom for his son Humphrey, and a hint of a further gift of £200. It was curious how easily these men could be persuaded to assent to a policy which they had glibly informed the Commons was leading the Kingdom to destruction. He did not think that £200 would have persuaded him to assent to a policy of war. Then the death of Courtenay, Arch-

bishop of Canterbury, could only be regarded as an unusual stroke of luck out of which he had been astute enough to make profit. He knew that the Arundel brothers had been putting their heads together again: he also knew that the Archbishop of York had often cast longing eyes at the Primateship. It had been a stroke of genius on Richard's part to offer it to the very man who had objected to his marriage. He sniffed the salt air exultantly and stared ahead of him at the crumpled grey line which was France.

So Thomas Arundel and Thomas of Woodstock were both accompanying the King to Calais. Everybody was most friendly, and each paid his old enemy as many compliments as he could lay tongue to. It was a situation that pleased Richard immensely.

He was even more pleased by his reception at Calais. He was met by the Duke and Duchess of Burgundy, who entertained him that night at the Abbey of St. Bertin. His windows looked out on the plain of St. Omer and he could see the workmen busy erecting tents and pavilions in honour of his meeting with the French King.

A magnificent ceremony sealed the triumph of the Broomscod Collar. On the morning of Friday, October 27—the vigil of St. Simon and St. Jude—four hundred English knights were drawn up opposite the same number of French knights, all fully armed and forming an avenue of swords. Their steel shone in the sun and the banners of France and

England fluttered in the wind. Through their ranks the two Kings were to walk, bareheaded, one from one end and one from the other; and when they met the eight hundred knights were to lower their swords and fall on their knees.

The French King, moving slowly along the human avenue with his uncles of Berry and Burgundy, saw advancing towards him a young man whose grey-blue eyes were staring thoughtfully past Charles and his train to the yellowing hills beyond the plain, a young man whose fine delicate beauty was almost womanish and whose hair shone like gold in the sun. This was the man who had spent his life suing for peace at the French Court: and now he had got it, why did he look so sad?

At that moment, Richard did not see the fussy little French King with his furrowed forehead and troubled stupid eyes, but a fifteen-year-old Ann sitting up in bed, her lips apart and one shoulder escaping from the sobriety of her nightgown—Ann leaning over him and laughing, and gloating over the discomfiture of Cardinal Pileo. Then he saw among the knights who were holding up their gleaming swords, one whose surcoat was blazoned with blue boars and whose left eyebrow was slightly raised though his face was very grave. But when he looked again, there was no knight there whose crest was a blue boar . . . Pulling himself together, he bowed very low to the King of France, whose hot clammy little hand felt for his and pressed it.

ROYAL GOLD CUP (? 1380)

*British Museum*

The next day, Richard dined with Charles in his magnificent tent, and even he was dazzled by the splendour of the feast. Beside it his own efforts to entertain seemed merely barbaric. And he was served by the Duke of Burgundy who talked of poetry and painting; by the Duke of Bourbon whose eyes danced as he rolled off his astonishingly brilliant jests; by the Duke of Berry who convinced him more than either of the others that his delicate compliments were sincere. But Charles himself at the top of the table sat huddled over his plate, stuffing the food into his mouth and looking furtively now and then at his guest. Richard sat back in his chair, talking and waving his hands, describing the new hall at Westminster that he was going to build, while the Duke of Berry leant ecstatically over him, listening when he should have been carving.

Charles wished sadly that he could afford this radiant young man a better companion than his six-year-old daughter. "I wish," he said a little wistfully to the Duke of Bourbon, "that she were as old as the Count of Saint Pol, for then she would love our son of England much more."

Richard bowed to him gaily across the table. "But I am delighted with her age," he said to the little apologetic huddled figure opposite; "there never was a lovelier age than six. I wish the whole world were aged six."

Which extravagance puzzled rather than consoled the anxious father of the bride.

II

Queen Isabel was young but she was very, very dignified. When she sat on Richard's knee, she sat up very stiff and straight, on her best behaviour, politely telling him how she had passed her day. She seemed a little shocked when he once seized her nose between two of his finger joints, and pushing his thumb up between them, held them out to her saying, "Look, I've pulled your nose off." For she was a married woman and she had seen that joke before. She confided in her governess Lady de Coucy, that she was afraid the King was rather facetious. "He laughs at his own jokes," she objected further.

Richard for his part was perpetually asking his friends how they amused little girls. Never, he said, had he been such a complete failure with the opposite sex before. And, moreover, Matthew his greyhound frightened her. Sometimes he would sit for a long time over the fire, and people thought he was worrying over the latest movements of the Duke of Gloucester who had attached himself once more to the Earl of Arundel. But instead, Richard would observe musingly to the room at large that he didn't think the Queen really cared for dolls. And he would be mildly surprised when they laughed.

But he had been really sincere when he told King Charles that he was delighted with her age. For although she was a child and an extraordinarily

severe unplayful child, it was not as if she were a woman that he would have to take in his arms as he had taken Ann. She expected nothing more of him when she lifted a cool soft cheek to his, than the dutiful paternal peck she had received from her father. When he lifted her up and felt her thin child's body under her stiff little frock, he was very glad she was no bigger than she was.

Once she looked at his altar-piece.

"Who's that?" she asked, pointing to one of the figures.

"Me," Richard confessed.

"Why?"

"Why?" He looked hopelessly at a pair of stern relentless brown eyes. It certainly seemed an absurd idea that one of the figures should be himself.

Then she was taken up to bed and he was left in the chapel staring at the altar-piece. But it reminded him too much of Ann, and he turned away to the society of Edward of Rutland.

Edward greeted him with a radiant face and a book of poetry. "You must read this, it's good." And he proceeded to read it himself out loud with very great feeling.

*'For who might ever know sweetness*
*Who has not tasted bitterness?'*

That's so true, isn't it?"

Richard began to laugh. Edward was surpassing himself in absurdity. "So true," he mocked, "only

Chaucer happened to say it first in rather more graceful metre. Who is your appalling plagiarist?"

"No, did he really? I'd forgotten that." Edward looked rather crestfallen. Then he laughed himself. "But everybody copies Chaucer. There's simply nothing else to do. I wish I had been born when the world was younger and all the best things hadn't been said by somebody else."

Richard went to the fireplace and warmed his feet. "And as it happens," he went on as if Edward had not spoken, "that particular sentiment is profoundly untrue."

Edward was a little horrified and began to protest, insisting that he would never have known the joy of loving Joan Holland if he had not previously been thrown into despair by the coldness of the Countess of Nottingham. Richard felt very old and wise as he stood on one leg by the fire, holding out the other to the blaze. He couldn't bother to explain it all to Edward but of course he knew that sorrow—a real profound shocking sorrow—took the gilt off all future joy.

He sat down and picked up a book of poems that a French knight had given him soon after he came back from Ireland, but he did not read it. He found himself thinking of Edward instead. He wondered why he liked him, for Edward was plainly a remarkable fool, and he supposed it was because Edward liked him. Edward thought him something rather splendid, and that was always pleasant, but he thought there was something more in it than that.

The foolishness of Edward was part of his charm; and every fatuous remark he made reminded Richard of himself at an earlier age. He never reminded him of Robert now; he had known him too long not to be aware of their differences. But his heart went out to Edward because he saw the same raw boyish admiration in his eyes that he had once given to Robert.

Then as he sat stroking the rich velvet binding of his book, something gently pressed his knee and he looked down into the despondent face of his favourite greyhound. Matthew had evidently taken it to heart that he should be turned out of the room whenever the Queen was present.

"Hullo, Matthew," said Richard almost apologetically.

Matthew was encouraged to thrust his chin a little further into his master's lap, and as he raised his eyes reproachfully, two little white crescent moons gleamed in the brindled dusk of his face.

Richard began to reason with him. He admitted that neither himself nor Matthew was accustomed to the rebuffs they received from the Queen, but he advised him to accept them philosophically and not to take the whole thing too seriously. But Matthew still looked injured, and after gazing dismally at him for a few minutes, gave a huge sigh and turned away to the fire, where he lay down, his head between his paws.

"Matthew's joined the war party," observed Edward from behind him. "He's had enough of

you and your French wife."

He was sitting with the rejected book on his knee, his legs thrown over the arm of his chair, and the torch behind him threw dancing shadows on to his face. Richard was glad he was there.

He laughed and looked at Matthew's reproachful back view. "A lost cause, now, I'm afraid, my poor dog," he said, and sat on the floor beside him, pulling at his ears. "You wouldn't go and join the war party, would you, old man?" he murmured. "You don't care a damn about Brest or Cherbourg. You wouldn't think of criticising your master."

"Odd to be a dog," he went on, rolling on to his face and propping himself up with his elbows. "Life must be so marvellously simple. Your most serious duty—hunting. A perfectly tangible and visible God. No worries; no enemies. Matthew, you brute, for your patron saint's sake, stop scratching."

Edward observed lazily that he himself was better off than either of them. He had not even fleas to worry him, and the fact that his God was invisible was an additional convenience.

Meanwhile the Duke of Gloucester was very busy in London. His agents were fanning a rumour of mysterious origin that the union of the Prince and Princess of Wales had never been blessed by the Church and that the reigning King was nothing but a bastard. But Gloucester himself pretended that he had never heard that rumour: he was talking a great deal about the taxation of the poor people—how the King was going to spend more money on the peace

than ever his grandfather had spent on the war. And Arundel's knights complained over mugs of beer of the ignominious surrender of all King Edward's castles that their lord had fought so well to defend; but they brought hope, too, to the despairing people with news that the good Earl was going to make one last bid for the salvation of the Kingdom. An inquiry into the King's household expenditure would be made at the next Parliament, and if he objected and used his drunken band of Cheshiremen against the friends of the people, that would be sufficient provocation to turn him off the throne in favour of his cousin and heir Roger Mortimer, the grandson of Lionel of Clarence.

## CHAPTER VI

### I

Thomas Mowbray, having concluded his examination of his treacherous dependant, Thomas Haxey, left the Tower for Westminster in profound thought. This Haxey had made a nuisance of himself, and thoroughly deserved the death to which he had been condemned; but all the same it was a beastly business to witness his horror at his sentence and to listen to his wails for mercy.

At this last January parliament, the Commons had brought up a petition to the King begging him to be less extravagant in his household expenditure. They had complained that the retainers of certain bishops and great ladies were maintained at the palace at the King's expense. Richard had naturally been furious about it, and had insisted on tracking down the author of the petition, who turned out to be this same cringeing Haxey. What was his object in doing it and who had put him up to it Mowbray had been sent to discover; and his discoveries had made him very thoughtful indeed.

The King was at Mass when Mowbray arrived at the palace; John Montague, whom he would have liked to consult before dropping his millstone on Richard, was burying his brother, Lord Salisbury,

and taking over his estates. Young John Beaufort —the Duke of Lancaster's newly-legitimised son— was not a perfect substitute for the sane and reliable Montague, so he talked to him of hawking and hid his concern.

Richard came in with his hand on the shoulder of Edward of Rutland and they were both laughing. It annoyed Thomas Mowbray that the King should surround himself with these tiresome young men, for people believed that he took their advice over things that really mattered. As it happened he always made up his mind himself; he had far more brains than all of them put together and knew it, and would not have taken their advice even if they had chosen to give it. But his friendliness with such pretty boys gave his enemies something to talk about.

"Well, Tom," he said gaily; "have you got any useful information out of the loyal Haxey?"

"It's certainly useful," Mowbray admitted; "and he gave it to me gratis. I didn't have to bribe him."

He paused, and Richard, seeing his hesitation, suggested that they should all fortify themselves with a drink.

"Apparently," said Mowbray, after he had availed himself of the offer, "the Haxey affair is the first stage in a definite campaign. Of course Arundel is behind it. The idea is to get the Commons worked up to consent to the setting up of another commission on the lines of the commission of 1386."

Richard seemed amused. "Well, I wish him joy,"

he said. "But I don't think that's so terribly alarming. After all, what possible hope has he got of support? I imagine only Gloucester is with him."

"Haxey's orders came from the Archbishop," Thomas murmured. "He's going to do rather well out of it. In '86, the Archbishop of Canterbury was *ex officio* head of the commission. And of course Warwick has joined them."

"Anyway," Richard resumed after his outburst at their treachery was over; "they can't possibly set up another commission without my consent and they can hardly imagine that I will give it. Besides, there's no possible excuse for their doing so. Nobody with the most elastic conscience can claim that I am a minor."

Thomas Mowbray refilled his wine cup. "Look here," he said seriously, "for some reason only known to God, Gloucester and Arundel are the heroes of London. They have got the Commons aware that you are extravagant and have impressed them that it's their business to interfere. Will it be difficult for them to get the whole country roused if you refuse to consent to this commission?"

This was a very long speech for the reticent and dour Tom Mowbray. But Richard only laughed at him. "My dear Tom," he said, "are you trying to frighten me? How can they possibly set up a Commission to control my household and presumably my Council when I am neither a child nor a lunatic, however much they may disapprove of my foreign

policy and want to run the show themselves? Either you or Haxey must have made a mistake. The whole thing's quite impossible. There's absolutely no precedent for setting up such a commission. They only got it through last time on the plea that I was too young to choose my councillors."

Seeing that Richard was amused rather than angry at Mowbray's fears, John Beaufort and Edward of Rutland began to snigger. But Thomas stubbornly persisted.

"I think if you look in the statute roll you will see that all mention of your age has been left out." He was more sullen than ever: he didn't like being laughed at.

"My dear fellow, I know that it is not. I made a special point of not agreeing to anything that was prejudicial to my regality. I saw it in writing."

Thomas respectfully contradicted him. He happened to know, for in '87 he had been one of the lords appellant and had helped to draw up the statute.

Richard thought hard. "Are you sure? Am I thinking of the parliamentary record? I was quite under the impression that it was on the statute roll." He leapt from his chair and called a page. "Send a messenger to the Keeper of the Rolls, asking him to bring me the statute and parliamentary rolls for the eleventh year of my reign as quickly as he can." He turned to Mowbray with brilliant eyes. "If that statute has got on to the roll in the form you say. . . ." He broke off and laughed

"Let's have a little dinner, anyway. No point in fasting."

And at dinner he was uproariously amusing.

The Keeper of the Rolls was received by the King in the presence of the Dukes of Lancaster and York, the Bishop of Exeter and the Earl of Nottingham. Richard almost snatched the parchment from him and spread it out on the table.

"Even if it doesn't actually mention my age, I am perfectly certain there's something about it's not being a precedent for another occasion," he was saying as he ran his finger down the roll. "Yes, here we are:—'*Nor that the said Commission at the last Parliament be drawn in Example nor Consequence hereafter.*' Can they get away from that?"

John of Gaunt was of the opinion that they could not. Edmund of Langley began to agree with him till he saw doubt on the face of Bishop Stafford, and then he decided to voice no opinion at all. Mowbray looked gloomily triumphant.

Richard raised his eyes from the roll and stared at Bishop Stafford. "Well?" he said.

The Bishop asked if he might see the Roll, and taking it from Richard, hunted for the controversial passage. Then as he babbled of measures of expediency and clauses indicating the King's implied assent to investigations of his household in times of necessity, Richard suddenly realised that it would make no difference to the Arundels whether there was a precedent or not if they had the hearty support

of the Commons. He hit the table with his fist.

"Don't you see," he shouted, "that it's a much bigger question than whether that particular clause makes a similar commission possible or not? The point is that we have never definitely stated that the setting up of that precise Statute was an act of treason; and when we pardoned the men who drew it up we never stated what their particular treasons were. If there is the slightest chance of their interpreting from its wording that either lords or commons have any right to investigate my household or that I am in any way responsible to them either for the number of people I entertain or for the choice of my councillors, then that Statute ought to be wiped off the roll as soon as possible. It's the only way to avoid civil war."

"And its authors declared traitors," observed John of Gaunt. He was so sick of his quarrel with Arundel that he had forgotten that his son had also been concerned with the making of that statute.

Richard was staring ahead of him. Here at last was a way of ending the weary struggle between those who loved war and those who loved peace. "If it's a petition from the Commons," he said slowly, "they can beg me to revoke my pardons seeing that their treason has injured my prerogative. But of course," he added with a glance of amusement at Thomas Mowbray, "my very good friends the Earls of Nottingham and Derby receive fresh pardons in consideration of the loyalty and affection they have since shown me."

His glance left Mowbray and rested upon his uncle of Lancaster. For the sake of John of Gaunt, his exasperating cousin was spared the punishment he deserved for his victory at Radcot Bridge.

## II

Although Westminster Hall was only half finished and only temporary wooden hoardings could keep the crowd from witnessing all the proceedings, writs were out for another parliament. Arundel and Warwick were in prison, and the Duke of Gloucester had mysteriously disappeared: people said the King had murdered him. The road to Westminster was crowded: some agitators were organising a stampede against the scaffolding should anything happen to the good Earl of Arundel. The more apathetic were reminded of his wonderful victories over the French, of how only he among the lords had had the courage to object to the French alliance, of how the wicked King had struck him with a mace in the precincts of Westminster Abbey. But when they drew near the hall and saw the line of archers with their White Hart badges, they hung back; it might not be politic just yet to protest against the proceedings of parliament.

It was on the second day that the excitement began. The first had been spent in revoking some rubbishy statute that had taken such a long time to read that the people outside had gone away cheated

of the sensation they had hoped for, and the people inside had slept. But the next day they came again, and an obliging archer who could hear the proceedings told them that the Earl of Arundel was standing his trial. When asked how the Earl was conducting himself, he was forced to admit that he was showing great courage; and when he added that he was being extremely rude and outspoken to the Duke of Lancaster, somebody cheered.

When parliament adjourned, the King could be seen crossing the courtyard to the Palace with his uncles of Lancaster and York, and if any of his less aristocratic subjects had been near him, they would have seen that his face was quite white. But at that moment they were crowding round a group of horsemen closely guarded by archers, who were cutting their way through the congested street. "There he is!" the people shouted and the men took off their caps.

The hands of one of the riders were bound tightly behind his back and his head was bare. But he sat his horse with perfect sang-froid, though it was a restive animal strongly objecting to the leading rein which fastened it to the horse of the Earl of Nottingham. Richard of Arundel, though nearing fifty, still had the seat of a nobleman and a cavalry officer of Edward the Third. The admiring citizens of London and Westminster followed the little group out of the royal city through London to Tower Hill.

At Charing Cross the crowd thickened and the company halted. The prisoner was observed to say

a word to the Earl of Nottingham (who the indignant people did not forget was his own son-in-law) and the Earl gave the order to unbind him. He had asked (and he on his way to die) that he might give with his own hands his last present to the people he had loved so well. But he didn't look as if he were going to his death: as someone observed, he might have been going to a banquet. The young Earl of Kent (he was his nephew) handed him a purse, and with a magnificent gesture he flung out of it handfuls of gold; and the people gathered up the coins sobbing and laughing. Then he moved on, his chin lifted, and the archers pressed more closely round him.

Shouting and cheering, the people followed on to Tower Hill. There the Earl dismounted and they saw him feel the axe's blade with his thumb before Lord Huntingdon tied back his hands. He spoke to both his nephew and his son-in-law, but the people could not hear what he said. Perhaps he was forgiving them for their share in his murder. Then, as he stood, Lord Nottingham bandaged his eyes and the executioner cut off his head with one stroke. The terrified people—those of them at least whose heads were not bowed in prayer—then saw a miracle happen, for the headless body stood erect for as long as it takes you to say an *Ave Maria,* before it fell on the grass at Nottingham's feet. So died Richard of Arundel, and with him the last champion of the people against the wicked tyranny of Richard of England.

The Earls of Huntingdon, Kent and Nottingham rode slowly back to Westminster. Although Arundel richly deserved his fate, they could not help wishing that they had not been mixed up with it. The people looked at them balefully, and some hissed while others called out curses. They could see that Arundel dead might do more harm than Arundel living; and should the King make any more enemies the citizens of London would gladly support them. So much in fact did John Holland observe, and his nephew of Kent agreed with him. But he wanted to know what Nottingham thought and pestered him for an answer.

"Never saw anything to touch the way he sat that devil of a horse!" mumbled Thomas Mowbray with a brow as black as night.

## III

But the King himself felt that nothing more revolting had ever happened. It had seemed a splendid thing when he first planned out the proceedings of that parliament: the lust of battle was upon him when he contemplated employing the lords' own methods for doing them to death. An army was to surround the city of Westminster as it had once surrounded the city of London, but an army wearing the White Hart. One of his chamber knights, Sir John Bushy, was to be Speaker for the Commons, and the petition against the statute and

the impeachment of the two Arundels and Warwick was to come from them, just as eleven years ago they had impeached Michael de la Pole. Richard had gloated over the extreme legality of his proceedings and appreciated the dramatic irony of the situation. But as the time drew nearer and it became increasingly obvious that Arundel would never confess his guilt, even in terror of his life, his feelings began to change.

His weakness infuriated him. It was absurd that when the welfare of the kingdom was at stake and the security of his own prerogative in the balance, he could hope that something would happen to prevent him from condemning Arundel to death. He would gladly have pardoned him as he had pardoned the snivelling Warwick: all he wanted from the whole lot of them was a confession that they had committed treason in drawing up the statute. But since Arundel had not only refused to confess his treason but had defied them to do their worst, his death was absolutely necessary. Yet the thought of shedding his blood—had he not shed enough of it already to satisfy the thirst of the Broomscod Collar? —made Richard feel steadily sicker and sicker.

It was pure cowardice he knew. He loathed putting anyone to death. He had spared the miserable life of that fallen creature Thomas Haxey for no reason but this morbid, even squeamish reluctance that he felt against taking any man's life. All his friends spoke of Arundel's death as the natural consequence of his actions: they considered it the

duty of themselves and the King to see that proper justice was carried out. John of Gaunt could even make jokes about it. And he, Richard, had always to hide from them his own terrible shame; to pretend that he had the same sensible and virile attitude towards the matter as they had, when in the depths of his weak and womanish heart, he knew that he longed for anything to happen to prevent it, even the end of the world.

It was another awful shock to him to hear on the third day that parliament sat, when the captain of the castle at Calais was ordered to produce his prisoner, that the Duke of Gloucester had died in prison. Richard had never contemplated this: he had only desired to force a confession out of him by keeping him in terror of his life. You couldn't publicly attack in parliament through the mouths of the Commons a son of Edward the Third. But though Thomas of Woodstock had made a most abject confession, it was too late to save his life: he had caught a severe chill from the damp of his prison and had died almost at once. Yet while Richard was wrestling with his emotions on hearing this news, John of Gaunt could lightly remark that nothing could have been more convenient.

He thought of the humiliations he had received from these two in 1387. He thought of the trial of Simon Burley, but the recollection of even that terrible scene, with Ann on her knees before the Duke of Gloucester, stirred up no feelings of anger against his uncle. He tried to recall the insolent humility of

Arundel as he stood before him in Westminster Abbey on the day of Ann's funeral, but he could hardly remember that for the memory of his blood on the stones. And when he thought of Robert's motionless body lying in its herb-guarded coffin at Earls Colne, it was not Gloucester or Arundel that he blamed for it but his cousin Henry of Derby who was going to get off scot free. When Henry was shouting his accusations at the dauntless prisoner in the half-built hall at Westminster, he had to tighten every nerve to prevent himself from sympathising with Arundel. For here at least was a man who cared about the war as heartily as he himself had cared about the peace, and when he called Henry a traitor he was only speaking the truth.

Richard had somehow got through the trial without showing his feelings, but it had been a terrible strain on his nerves. Indeed he had found himself replying to Arundel's defence that he had once been pardoned for these crimes of which he was now accused, in curiously calm, dispassionate tones. And nobody could have guessed from the impersonal manner in which he commuted the hideous sentence of hanging and quartering to simple beheading, that it was not a mere formality, but that he was really glad to do it from the bottom of his heart. But he had never felt such a wreck in his life as he did when it was all over.

He remembered feeling the same hysterical reaction after his meeting with the peasants at Smithfield, and that night he had screamed in his sleep.

Now the night after Arundel's death, he woke up suddenly, sweating, and a servant hurried in to ask what was the matter. To his horror he realised that he must have been screaming again. He pretended he was asleep and hoped the man would think he was mistaken; but the next morning everybody in the palace knew. By midday the gossip reached St. Alban's, where it was carefully entered in the monastic chronicles as evidence that the King's conscience was pricking him for the murder of Arundel. And by this time, the report went that not only had the King called out several times in his sleep, but that the ghost of Arundel had appeared at his bedside.

## CHAPTER VII

### I

RICHARD found it was not always easy to pretend to John of Gaunt that he had forgiven Henry for the Battle of Radcot Bridge. He made him Duke of Hereford to show his goodwill, but it was obvious that he did not care for his company. Edward of Rutland (now Duke of Aumerle) was always with the King; but Henry, the son of the senior branch, was not welcomed at Court.

Gaunt could scarcely expect further concessions to his son. Richard had shut his eyes deliberately to rumours that Henry had plotted with Gloucester and Arundel to depose him in favour of the heir-presumptive, Roger Mortimer; he had given him a fresh pardon for his share in the proceedings of 1387; he had allowed him to join with his father in accusing Richard of Arundel, that his name might be cleared of sinister suspicions. But John could not help wishing that the King would not treat him as if he were some nauseating smell.

Richard's behaviour troubled other people besides the Duke of Lancaster. John Montague discussed it seriously with Thomas Mowbray and the new Bishop of Carlisle.

"You see, what it comes to is this. He can't run

with the hare and hunt with the hounds. Henry is either his enemy and as such should have been accused with treason like the others, or else he is his friend and shouldn't be insulted. Henry alive and getting jealous is positively dangerous."

Thomas Mowbray, remembering certain occasions when he had lost his temper badly with some of Richard's friends, observed that young Kent, Beaufort and Rutland were not doing the King any good. They followed his lead and were as rude as they could be to Henry of Hereford whenever they got the chance. "Those are the three who are giving us all the name of dukelings," he added sourly. He had received his dukedom at the same time as the young men in question.

"Moreover," observed the Bishop of Carlisle, "to leave Mortimer's name off the Honours List was a foolish thing to do."

They all agreed that Richard was making his favourite mistake of ignoring the city of London. The people's love for Gloucester and Arundel had been transferred to Henry of Hereford, and when Roger Mortimer arrived in London in January, 1398, they had greeted him most royally, wearing his colours. But Roger Mortimer, being a prudent young man, had met Richard's suspicions by approving in all heartiness of the attack on the men who were supposed to be his allies.

The friends of Richard asked themselves gloomily the unanswerable question what was he at? He had chosen to ignore all rumours which involved his

cousins in a charge of treason, and yet he goaded them on to hate him the more. The only sign that he gave that he had recognised the hostility of London was to move his parliament to Shrewsbury.

At last Thomas Mowbray gave a huge sigh. "I think I'd better deal with Henry," he growled, and with a sheepish grin he added that he used to have some influence with the Duke of Hereford once.

He tackled him when they were still at Shrewsbury.

"You know," he said, "we've got to be pretty careful what we're about, these days. The King has still got his eye on us. He hasn't forgotten Radcot Bridge."

Henry looked very angry, but he was not passionate by nature and only said coldly: "What do you mean?"

Thomas suddenly felt rather foolish. "I only mean," he said sulkily, "that Richard might possibly be suspicious of me as well as of you, and if you go about stirring up sedition in London and making secret assignations with the Earl of March, I shall probably get mixed up in it too. So I'm just telling you for both our sakes."

"Are you accusing me of treason?" Henry's voice was hard like the edge of a sword.

Thomas Mowbray surveyed him carefully and decided that he looked dangerous. He gave a laugh which was hearty in intention but a little unconvincing in effect. "My dear fellow," he said, "I'm not accusing you at all. I'm only saying that if you

do such and such, such and such will happen. That's all." He turned away and grinned over his shoulder. " It was kindly meant."

Henry was left rooted to the spot. He couldn't believe that Norfolk really feared the King's suspicions, for Richard was more gracious to him than to anybody at Court with the single exception of Edward of Aumerle. All that preliminary chatter could be taken as bluff. Nor could he seriously imagine that Thomas Mowbray would take the trouble to warn him out of pure disinterestedness. Therefore: what could it all mean? Was Richard aware of his conspiracy with Roger of March? And how did Mowbray come to know of it? Perhaps he had been sent to trap him into giving himself away.

He thought again of his own words to Mowbray: Are you accusing me of treason? The only way to clear himself of all suspicion and to anticipate any designs Richard might have on his life, was to take up Thomas's challenge and to give him the lie. Or —and he set his jaw—why not embellish Thomas's words a little and suggest that it was he who was the traitor? That would be the best answer to his inexplicable advances, which Henry was sure could not, whatever he said, have been kindly meant.

Thus with an air of extreme self-righteousness, Henry visited his King. The Duke of Norfolk had hinted, he said, that his most illustrious and generous lord was still anxious to revenge himself for the episode of Radcot Bridge; that he was going to revoke the pardon he had so graciously granted to

the two dukes and to accuse them of treason as he had accused Gloucester and Arundel. Their lives in fact were in immediate danger, and it was Norfolk's considered opinion that there was no way to defend themselves but by stirring up the people to consent to the King's deposition. He, Hereford, thought it only right and proper to report such a speech to his dread lord himself.

Henry made this extraordinary statement kneeling on one knee at the King's feet, in the presence of his father and uncle. Richard, who had just been informed by Tom Mowbray that his cousin was plotting his ruin could not forbear indulging in a broad smile. But he suppressed it before Henry saw it and solemnly told him that the matter would be investigated. When Norfolk was summoned to answer this challenge, he of course replied that he was innocent but that Hereford was guilty; and Richard, with a glance at Gaunt's unhappy face, declared that the case should be brought up at the parliament then sitting.

Richard decided that the only possible procedure was by trial of battle unless the parliamentary committee set up at Shrewsbury could discover further proofs of the treason of either party. He knew in his heart who was guilty, but nothing could be proved, and Tom would most certainly prove it in battle. Had he not defeated Henry already? But in order to hide his partiality for Tom he had him placed in custody at the Tower while his rival was allowed to go free. For once he considered the Lon-

doners, and did all he could to show them that he did not suspect the Duke of Hereford of treason.

The committee dismissed the case on the grounds of insufficient evidence, and it was transferred to a court of chivalry held at Windsor on April 29; and there Richard, presiding over the court, fixed the battle for September 16. In the meanwhile the whole country was shocked by the news of the death of the Earl of March in Ireland, in August the same year; and now only a child, Roger's son, stood between the throne and the House of Lancaster. People said that this battle was the King's unprincipled way of getting rid of Henry of Hereford, so that he could more easily make as his heir his favourite cousin Edward of Aumerle. For they remembered as well as Richard that Thomas Mowbray had defeated the Duke of Hereford already.

## II

John of Gaunt, that champion among diplomats, prepared himself for his last encounter. He had never failed to get his own way with Richard, and yet nothing had ever been so difficult as this last task he had set himself. Could he possibly persuade the King to relinquish this idea of trial by battle in order to spare his son a death he knew he deserved? It was almost incredible to think that Richard would show Henry any mercy; he had been amazingly for-

bearing and Henry had not repaid him. Yet supposing he would not give in, Henry might rouse London. There was a chance, John thought, of intimidating the King if pleading would not succeed.

He was sitting in the gardens of Windsor, looking down over the great stretch of wood and meadow which spread out below the castle, and at the river winding through it past the village of Eton away to Maidenhead. In front of him Edward of Aumerle was slowly walking the King's enormous roan charger up and down the terrace, and Richard walked beside him holding his tiny Queen on to the saddle. Isabel sat up stiffly, staring a little suspiciously at the horse's flattened ears.

Richard suddenly called out to Edward to stop. The Queen had had enough. He lifted her down, laughing, kissed her, and flung her upwards into the air. Her shout of excitement showed that she was beginning to thaw, and that the King was already on better terms with his wife.

He joined his uncle on the seat with Isabel on his knee. " Isn't it a marvellous day?" he said. " Isabel thought a good gallop was just what she needed, didn't you, madam? But she didn't care much for the mount I offered her: she likes them with shorter paces."

Isabel smiled at him from under her eyelashes. " I like riding you better than that horse," she said. " You don't put your ears back when you're angry."

She said it as if she expected to be laughed at: already Richard was spoiling her and encouraging

her to show off. John was annoyed.

"Has Isabel seen the goldfish in the new pond?" he asked lazily. "I feel certain she would like her cousin Edward to show them to her."

Richard laughed as he looked at Isabel's vanishing form, her hand clasping the Duke of Aumerle's. "What do you want, uncle," he said, "since you have driven everybody away?"

John hesitated a little before answering. Then: "You must forgive me for being blunt, but may I ask you one question? What do you intend to do with Henry if he is beaten in this duel?"

Richard frowned. "You must forgive me for answering you bluntly," he said slowly. "It is very painful to have to say it to his father, but of course I shall have to accept the proof that he is a traitor, and he must suffer the penalty." His fingers plucked at the grass.

"But, Richard, we really have got past the days when people believed that trial by battle was any sort of proof."

"And yet, unfortunately, there is no other procedure in a case like this. I am dreadfully sorry and can only hope with you that Henry wins."

John tried another tack. "Apart from my own feelings as his father, I really do think that this would be a most imprudent step for you to take when you are already unpopular and Henry is not. Upon my soul, I shouldn't like to say what would happens if Norfolk wins and Henry is condemned to death. It's not safe to risk it."

He saw that Richard looked stubborn: also he was dangerously quiet.

"An angry mob is a nasty thing to deal with," he continued musingly.

"And yet my only triumph was with an angry mob," Richard suddenly flashed back. "Oh, my dear sir," he burst out passionately, "why do you pretend that you have any other motive in trying to dissuade me from allowing this battle to take place than to save the life of your son? But don't you see that if I gave in I should have to admit the treason of one of my best friends? Which as you know would be manifestly unjust."

John begged him to be less violent, to take a more balanced view. "Naturally my chief motive is to save his life. I never pretended that it wasn't. At the same time I do feel very strongly that you will make a great many enemies if you put Henry to death. His confidence that he will beat Norfolk alone prevents him from rousing the mob now. But I know he won't beat Norfolk," his father added with a father's profound knowledge of his son's accomplishments; "I don't know what it is, but he doesn't seem to have the defences that Norfolk's got."

Richard looked very steadily at the Duke of Lancaster. He saw an elderly man, his hair thinning at the temples, and its yellow rapidly fading and streaked with grey. But his face was as calm and impassive as it had ever been, and he was even smiling a little as he thought both critically and indulgently of Henry's manner of jousting. His eyes met

Richard's with a magnificent serenity: it was difficult to believe that he was fighting for his son's life.

The King got up. "Thank you for your advice," he said abruptly. "But I'm afraid I can't take it. Matters must remain as they are now."

III

It was a choice between John of Gaunt and Thomas Mowbray. Richard could not make up his mind. He did not seriously fear the city of London, for he had a disciplined army, the support of the landed interest, and the greater part of the Church on his side. The duel was to be fought at Coventry, up in the friendly midlands, and the sentence could be carried out before the Londoners were aware of the result of the battle. But he was shaken by Lancaster's appeal and his manner of making it: the love of his three uncles for their sons generally amused but now touched him. He had never had a son and hardly remembered his father, and he felt now that he would have liked to have known that relationship. It must be a curiously binding one. Perhaps it was something like his own feeling for his cousin Edward—a tender amusement with which you watched the growth of somebody a little like yourself.

But on the other hand there was Tom Mowbray shut up in the Tower, who had trusted him and expected his support. It was perhaps surprising that

Tom should be one of his friends, for he was a very simple creature with no trace of the highbrow in his composition, unlike the rest of the King's associates. But he had a sort of ungainly charm that Richard found most refreshing, and in him—most surprisingly—the virtues of honesty and humility were definitely attractive. Richard couldn't sacrifice Thomas Mowbray for Henry of Derby who had not spared Robert.

But the strain was telling on John of Gaunt. He looked tired and old, and people said he was breaking up.

The day of the battle came, and Richard had not yet made up his mind. John Montague had suggested that he should banish them both, but the day came and he hadn't done it. He wanted so frightfully to see Henry brought to justice at last, and he had no fear that Thomas would fail to do it.

He took his seat on the throne that had been erected for him, with the expression of wooden impassivity he had acquired through long training in the art of hiding his feelings. A little below him and on his left sat his uncle of York; on his right sat the Duke of Lancaster. Beside him stood the officer holding the warder with which he was to give the sign for the battle to start; and with this warder, he remembered, he could arrest the proceedings of that battle at any moment he chose.

He looked down at the open field before him and then at the tense crowds that encircled it. On his

right were the golden leopards of the Duke of Norfolk; on his left, the silver swans of Hereford. The combatants themselves were in their tents, waiting for the herald's summons. There was a silence of suspense when the King seated himself, and a perceptible shudder when he caught the eye of the herald and lifted his warder.

The trumpet sounded and the Dukes of Hereford and Norfolk rode into the lists. Richard looked down for a moment at the splendour of their silver and gold and found himself thinking how odd it was that Tom's sullen ugly face should be behind that glittering visor. Then his gaze wandered to John of Gaunt.

John was leaning forward, his arms resting on the balustrade. His profile was turned towards Richard, for his eyes were upon the knight of the Silver Swan. But even as Richard looked, he sat back with an air of lazy unconcern and his fingers drummed a careless beat on his knee. His eyes were half closed, and he looked round upon the scene a little critically as if he were watching an interlude. But the hand that toyed with his jewelled collar—a characteristic mannerism of the Duke—shook very slightly and Richard saw it.

As Thomas was steadying his excited horse and wishing as he absently murmured a final paternoster that his array was as splendid as that of Hereford, a sudden very curious sound made him jump. It was the herald's trumpet blown feverishly by a man who was so surprised himself that he

hadn't got the instrument under proper control. At the same time a cry rose up all round him, Hereford's horse reared and his own shook his bit at the sudden pull his master gave him, spattering him with foam. Then he heard a man's voice shout quite near him: "Stop! The King has thrown his warder down!"

Later that day, after the sentence of perpetual banishment was passed upon him, he was ordered to visit the King. Richard stopped him as he was trying to kneel and seized his hand. He began to explain rapidly and rather incoherently that the thing was forced upon him.

Mowbray smiled—a very rare thing with him. "Oh, that's all right, old chap," he murmured with the familiarity of embarrassment. "Had to do it. Quite see that. Anyway, it's better than hanging, which would have happened otherwise. The odds were all against my having the luck to beat Hereford again." And as Richard protested that on the contrary they were all in his favour, he continued to mutter, rather feverishly: "Law of averages, you know; law of averages."

Richard caught his elbows. "You're coming back," he told him fiercely through clenched teeth. "I'll get you back somehow. Oh, but I always say that!" he broke off in horror, and threw himself about the room.

Tom Mowbray stood quite still, scowling and scratching his head. A scene like this made him feel as if he had no clothes on.

# PART III

## CHAPTER I

### I

He was at last master of his own Kingdom. With the departure of Henry of Hereford, there was no one left to resist his policy of peace with France by inventing unconstitutional means of taking away his power. He often thought how curious it was that his love of France had involved him in all this: it had driven the war party to check him at every turn, and himself to a realisation of the sanctity of kingship. The lectures of Thomas Rushook might have been forgotten if it had not been brought home to him by bitter practical experience that a State can only have one ruler. You might as well have a ship with rudders for each member of the crew as a State ruled by a parliament or a commission of inexperienced lords. That was what the solemn sacramental ceremony had meant of anointing him with holy oil at his coronation: it symbolised that he was set apart to be specially honoured and reverenced—not because he was better or cleverer than anyone else, but because without such reverence you could not hope to preserve the life of the whole society. The stormy parliament of 1397 in which the Earl of Arundel had been condemned to die, had asserted this truth once and for all. The decision of the

judges given so long ago as 1387 (and calmly ignored by Gloucester and Arundel even though Shirning the Lord Chief Justice frankly maintained that he would have said the same himself) was reasserted ten years afterwards, and the Bishop of Exeter had opened parliament with a sermon on the same subject. Yes; he could congratulate himself this year 1398, that he had restored to its former glory the prerogative of the crown which his great-grandfather's deposition, his grandfather's long senility and his own minority had reduced to insignificance.

He naturally followed up the thirty years' truce with France with other declarations of friendship. To show his goodwill, he attempted to raise an army to support the French King's interests in Italy. When this scheme failed through shortage of money, he threw himself heartily into the new question raised by the French, of how to overcome the scandalous schism in the Church.

Thomas Merke, that scholar and gentleman who had left the cloisters of Westminster for the King's Court and the bishopric of Carlisle, was all in favour of the action taken by the princes of France and the Empire. The remedy suggested as early as 1393 by the University of Paris that both popes should be asked to resign, seemed to him to be a very feasible one, and he could not but approve of the lay princes' determination to back this request with force. Richard readily agreed that a council of bishops, abbots and great theologians must have

power to make and unmake popes if the Church were ever to be free of schism, and he came to Westminster soon after Christmas to discuss the question with the English clergy.

He didn't sleep very much the night after he arrived in the city: his brain was too active. And it was a night crowned with large frosty stars: he stared out of his window at Aldebaran burning red in the forehead of the Bull and at the glittering jewels in the sword belt of Orion.

He thought of the time when his diptych was painted. Cardinal Pileo's remedy had been to involve all Christendom in a war—England and the Empire against France and Spain. But matters had progressed since those days: now France was actually joining with the Empire in order to end the schism peaceably. The credit was hardly due to Charles, who even at this moment was at the mercy of one of his painful fits of insanity, but rather to his uncles, the Dukes of Burgundy and Berry, who definitely decided to renounce their allegiance to the Avignon Pope. And they were looking to England to help them, hinting that if the useless Wenzel were deposed as unworthy of his office of Emperor of Christendom, a very suitable candidate might be found in his brother-in-law, Richard of England.

His thoughts flew back to the *De Monarchia*. What Dante had written, if it applied to him and to England in the days when Thomas Rushook used to lecture to the boys of the Royal Household, applied much more now, since he was to take up the

sceptre of the prince for whom the poet had written. "*The human race,*" he remembered, "*is most one when it is all united in one, which cannot be save when it is subject in its totality to one prince.*" He had read it then as a justification for his position as King of England: he was to unite in his person all the various scattered and disjointed elements which made up his kingdom, giving them harmony and purpose. But now he was to unite in his person the whole of Christendom—France, Spain, Hungary and England as well as the little princedoms of the Empire. He intended to be a true Emperor as he had made himself a true King: he would be satisfied with nothing but supremacy over the whole world.

"For in him the Lord shall sit—in him the Lord shall sit." Only through that mysterious sacramental power could he claim the stupendous position of Emperor of all Christendom.

He leant out of his window, and looking again at the garden and river lying asleep under the stars, he remembered the vision he had once seen from that window, of himself leading all Christendom in a holy war. He saw no angels now—somehow it wasn't as easy as it used to be for his thoughts to be transformed from the earthiness of words to the sublimity of a vision—but the same strange pain caught him when he remembered that he was now to lead the world not to war but to peace. The Christmas message rang in his head: "*Gloria in altissimis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus bonæ vol-*

*untatis*." In a sort of ecstasy he kissed the Broomscod Collar.

But the proceedings of that clerical council the next day induced Richard to walk straight out of the Painted Chamber in dignified disapproval. He went to the rooms of his brother of Exeter, who was entertaining a collection of people after hunting.

Richard flung himself into a chair and begged them all to go on with what they were doing. His brother asked him how the council had gone.

"Most vilely," he said. "Never have so many bigoted fools been gathered together in the same room before. There wasn't a person with the slightest suspicion of a clear mind. Not a person. Think of it, John. We showed them the position about as clearly as we well could. We pointed out how no one could tell which Pope was the true father of the Church and how shocking it was for the Church to be divided; we said that after terrific consultation and prayer, both princes and clergy on the continent had decided that both should be asked to resign; we couldn't have said more strongly that it was the decision of a united council and not merely a French fad. Yet still they murmured that everybody knew who was the true pope in the days of the crusading Bishop of Norwich; still they dared hint that we were influenced by French interests and not from an honest desire to remedy these appalling conditions."

He had got up from his chair and had begun to pace about. The people listening made vague sympathetic noises, but even as they spoke, Richard

became aware that they didn't mind at all what had happened in that assembly of clergy, or for that matter, what would eventually happen to Pope and Antipope. They had been interrupted in an entertaining exchange of unpublishable stories. He looked at William Scrope who had seemed as keen yesterday about the question as he was himself, but William was hiding a yawn.

He had come really to the wrong set. One could not expect much of John Holland's friends—hearty, hunting people like the Scropes, the Dispensers and Sir Thomas Percy. John Montague would have cared enough about it to listen, but he might have thrust his extreme antipapalist views on Richard who was hardly in a mood to bear with them. Edward of Rutland was the man to seek out: he would have hung on Richard's every word, perfectly convinced that the matter was of the greatest importance because Richard said it was. And, thinking of him, Richard saw in his mind what he so often saw in reality, the light of delighted devotion in Edward's soft dark eyes.

He laughed suddenly at John Holland's startled friends and told them a short Latin rhyme which capped all their stories. He had got it from Thomas Merke. You could generally rely on a monk for something really filthy.

But later he escaped from them and wandered out into the cold evening towards the Abbey. It was twilight but the sky was still red, and for a moment he stared in ecstasy at the silhouette of the

great church against a very pale background, its windows flashing fire. It would stand, he thought, whether the spiritual Church was torn in two or not: the narrow mind of its Abbot could not affect its quiet greatness. He shook his fist at the west porch, for Colchester's house lay behind it, angry because so small a man could become the Father of St. Peter's. Then he went through the cloisters to the anchorite's cell.

He had visited the old man only once before in his life—the day that he rode out to meet Wat Tyler at Smithfield when he was fourteen. He never knew why, some fifteen years afterwards, his feet should take him there again.

He sat down outside the anchorite's cell and knocked at the grille. The old man peered out blinking his eyes, but he did not recognise the King, who humbly announced that he was Richard of England. "What can I do for you, my son?" he said in the hoarse voice of a man not used to speaking.

"I want your counsel, Father. I'm at my wits' end." And he poured out his torrent of invective against the stupidity of the clergy and the shocking scandal of the Church in schism. "What are we to do next? It's a complete deadlock."

There was a silence. Then from behind the bars came a quavering but very astonished voice. "These are strange ideas, my son. Surely they are not the fruit of prayer."

Richard felt angry. His ideas were not at all

strange. He saw that he made a great mistake in supposing that an old fool who shut himself up in a cell could possibly know what was best for the Church in these enlightened days. But the last sentence tied his tongue. He couldn't remember whether he had prayed for God's blessing before he made his decision. Anyway, he was sure he was right. But was he so sure after all?

At last he said, uncomfortably: "Why do you think my ideas are strange? Surely it is right to try and heal the schism?"

"There is only one Pope. There cannot be two with equal claims. When the angels found tares growing up amongst the wheat, did they consider that neither had a right to live, and so give them both to the flames? No; they carried the wheat into the garner and threw away the tares."

He stopped but Richard waited.

"What you rightly seek, my son, is unity. But unity only comes through obedience to the Holy Father as Christ's Vicar: when that is lost, faith in the Mass, faith in the priests that celebrate it, faith in Holy Church and finally faith in Our Lord Himself—all these go too."

"But surely——" Richard was beginning, and was silent, remembering the Lollards.

"Smite the shepherd," resumed the old man with sudden fierceness, "and the sheep will be scattered. You princes are like the four horns which scattered Judah: even so will you scatter Christ's flock, His Church. But God has always spared a remnant—

even Nineveh would have been spared for the six-score thousand helpless children too young to know their right hand from their left; and though it is written in the book that the sheep must be scattered, the Father will have some regard for the prayers of the faithful and the intercessions of the blessed Mother of God. The Church will be broken to pieces, but the Holy Spirit will not cease to cherish each separate limb until it shall please God to join them once more into one Body."

He turned away as if the interview were over, then suddenly coming back to the grille: "If a King must be supreme in his Kingdom, how much more must the Holy Father be supreme over the world. Would you deny to the Vicar of Christ what you claim for a temporal monarchy?" He stopped to clear his throat. "Go, my son; pray for protection from presumptuous sins, and do no more to destroy the Church your Mother."

Only in the privacy of his chapel could Richard think out what the anchorite had said. He flung himself on his knees before the altar, and looking up, noticed the diptych standing there as usual with a lamp burning in front of it. The Virgin still smiled on the little boy who was himself, and the broomscods shone out from the scarlet of his gown with the same proud splendour. But he was conscious of nothing now but the mockery of it all; he had spent his whole life in the attempt to fulfil the vow symbolised by that picture and where had

it led him? He had mouthed the same atrocities as Gloucester and Arundel: he had tried to throw round the Holy Father the same web that had been thrown round himself. He had need to pray for protection against presumptuous sins.

He realised then what had happened. He had let the Broomscod Collar become an obsession. He had followed it with the fervour of a knight for his lady, and it had proved a hard mistress, eager for sacrifice. Then when he had won this proud, cruel lady, she was not satisfied, but would press him on to do further deeds in her service. Well, he was through with her now, he loathed her: his neck would no longer bear her clinging embraces. He looked up again at his altar-piece, then leapt up to snatch at that, too, and to grind it to pieces with his heel.

But its beauty stayed his hand. There was nothing like this blue in all the world: it was created by a man who only saw the heavens. And yet the thin tired face of John the Baptist must have been painted by a man who had eyes for his fellows and their sufferings. Richard sat down again, the picture on his knees, and reminded himself of how its creator Nicholas Cheriton, the most successful of the Westminster painters, and, people said, the most dissolute, had suddenly, at the age of forty, renounced the world for the cloisters of St. Peter's. They said that he had been a moody arrogant man with a very violent temper; but as a monk he had shown nothing but the patient simplicity and

boundless gaiety of a St. Francis of Assisi. If the diptych illustrated nothing else that was true, it certainly told the story of Nicholas's life: one side showed you the man who knew and loved men almost too well, the other the man who had found perfect joy and humility at the feet of Our Lady of Sorrows.

Later, Thomas Merke was surprised by a visit from the King. He wandered round the room, fingering everything in it, talking so fast about nothing that the Bishop did not attempt to follow his conversation. He guessed that he had something to say and that this flow of eloquence was not important.

At last it came. "I suppose you haven't got a copy of the Benedictine Rule about you, have you?" Thomas gave it to him and he vanished. "Now, what can the King want with my Rule?" thought the startled Bishop, who did not know that Richard had gone away to read the chapter on humility on his knees. Nor could he guess that as the King pored over the message of St. Benedict, the secret of the Cross began gradually to dawn on his bewildered understanding.

II

Although John of Gaunt maintained the same magnificent control of himself that he had shown throughout the whole quarrel between Norfolk and

Hereford, it became obvious that the parting with his son affected him very deeply. He was frequently ill, suffering from strange unaccountable pains for which Tidman, Bishop of Worcester, the King's doctor, could find no remedy. People murmured that Henry would be back in six years, and what were six years? but the Duke observed serenely that he would be dead before then.

Richard had written patents to various attorneys entrusting the care of the Lancaster estates to them on Henry's behalf, should his father die before his term of banishment was over. He had also shortened that term from ten years to six. But still John of Gaunt grew weaker, and his attacks of pain more frequent. At last on February 3, 1399, he died.

His death did not come as a great shock to Richard, because he had been expecting it; but the expectation did not help him to bear the sorrow any better. John was his last link with those very distant days when he had lived with his mother at Kennington and life was so much more simple than it had ever been since. He seemed to see London again on the day of his coronation, the fountains in Cheapside spurting wine, the great cardboard angels hanging from the housetops, and little girls dressed in white, throwing flowers, while his tall, slender, handsome uncle rode out in front of him with the great sword of state, clearing the way for the King through the narrow packed streets. Or another scene would come before him: a thin old man with

quite a yellow face lying in bed and groaning, and himself picked up by the Duke of Lancaster and told that the old man was his father. He had been shocked to see such lines and wrinkles in his father's face and had hidden his own in his uncle's skirts. . . . Whatever John had done or been, he had loomed large in his nephew's childhood, and his death made Richard feel as if he had lost a limb.

His grief was not unmixed with bitterness. His consideration for John had not saved his life, and his own was the poorer by the loss of Thomas Mowbray. He sent a formal notice of his death to King Charles but he felt too sore to send any message at all to Henry who was at the French Court. He never wished to speak to him or to communicate with him again.

But the messenger on his return from Paris forced him by his news to think of Henry in spite of his desire to put him out of his mind. He said that the new Duke of Lancaster was high in Charles's favour, and that it was the common gossip at the French Court that he was going to marry the daughter of the Duke of Berry. The King brooded over this news for some time.

He was damned if he was going to let Henry marry Mary of Berry. This was too much. That Henry, who had so priggishly maintained his disapproval of the French alliance until his life was in danger, should now go fawning round the French Court and the house of the Duke of Berry, filled Richard with disgust and repulsion. He should have

died long ago, and yet because Richard had considered his father's feelings, he was still alive and in possession of his father's estates.

Richard remembered the necessity there had always been to respect the power of the House of Lancaster. But Henry would be richer even than John, for he added to his paternal inheritance the fortune of his first wife, Mary Bohun. Mary of Berry's dowry would make him richer still. He wouldn't stay meekly in exile with the money and position to turn Richard off his throne. Richard wished he had never granted him those patents which affirmed his right to the Lancaster inheritance. He had done enough to forfeit them in all conscience.

Meanwhile, worse news came from Ireland. He had made his nephew of Kent (now Duke of Surrey) Viceroy after the death of Roger Mortimer, but Surrey seemed likely to go the same way as his cousin. No one could stand up to Art Macmurragh, "King" of Leinster; but he had been tamed in '95 at the table of the King of England. Only Richard could deal with him, but could Richard leave the country now, while Henry was alienating the King of France against him—Henry who was the idol of the people?

John was dead. There was no need to suffer Henry's treachery any longer. If he had granted those patents, surely he had a right to revoke them. Yet they had been granted in parliament, and could not legally be annulled without the consent of the

lords and commons who were supposed to have granted them—unless the committee set up at Shrewsbury to deal with petitions that parliament had not had time to listen to might possibly have power to act in the name of the parliament that had set it up. He would put it before them immediately.

He consulted John Montague, who was a member of the committee. John was doubtful: he thought that the revocation of letters patent hardly came into its sphere: it was not a petition brought up at the last parliament and it was not exactly a result of further inquiries into the Norfolk and Hereford treason case, although you might just stretch a point and claim that it was. But in his humble opinion it would be a little far fetched. "No one would object now," he said, "but if Hereford wants to claim his estates he might maintain that we had acted beyond the powers entrusted to us by Parliament. We don't want to provide him with a grievance. You could only do it by a special act of your prerogative."

Richard thought it out. He didn't want to interfere with the liberties of his subjects in so far as those liberties had been sanctioned by custom; and an arbitrary measure such as revoking letters patent granted by the King *in parliamento* would certainly infringe those liberties. His theory of Kingship would never have admitted that the King *in concilio* could annul the acts of the King *in parliamento*. The matter was discussed with William Ferriby, his lawyer; and it was Ferriby who suggested that the

wording of the parliament roll might be altered. The committee had been given the power to deal with petitions from the Commons and with the recent treason case: all that was needed was to add some such clause as " all other matters determined by the King." Thus Richard could go to Ireland without having to deprive the lords and commons of their liberties in order to fortify himself against the wealth of Lancaster. Altering the roll was unconstitutional, but it was better than ignoring the rights of parliament altogether, which he would otherwise have to do if he wished to save his crown from Henry and his English subjects in Ireland from Art Macmurragh.

His final thrust was to send John Montague to Paris in March, to announce the royal displeasure at the proposed match between Henry and Mary of Berry. Charles had no wish to forfeit the friendship of England for the sake of Lancaster, and forbade the marriage, though reluctantly. But the French noblesse were sorry for Henry, and wondered why the King of England treated this pleasant young man so badly; they talked, too, of the Earl of Salisbury's rudeness to him—John had frankly cut him at Court. Nevertheless, the poetess Christine de Pisan forgave the Earl his frankness for the lyrics that he had written, and John Montague returned to England with one of her sons in his train, for she could think of no higher honour for her boy.

Then Richard left for Ireland.

## CHAPTER II

### I

The city of Salisbury lay bathed in sunset. If you stood on the arm of the down which slopes away from Harnham Hill northwards to the plain, you could see the cathedral standing out rose-red from the soft evening mists that hid the roofs of the town. Up on the hills the air was fresh and sweet, and smelt of nibbled turf and hawkweed; only an overgrown lamb would disturb the stillness as it frolicked up to its thin newly-fleeced mother for a shameless pull at her teats. If you looked to your left into the valley, you could see the wall of the Abbey of Wilton, but you could not hear the vesper bell unless your ears were sharp.

Inside the walls of Salisbury, there was not this peace. A noisy, drunken crowd were sweeping down its streets, singing hymns of hate to Sir John Bushy, one of the most prominent members of the King's Council. There was a vague, confused idea in their muddled heads that this Bushy had robbed the poor, murdered the Duke of Gloucester and ordered the execution of the Earl of Arundel, which seemed to them both wicked and unnecessary. So they

sang with eager throats the song that was spreading over England, marching in a disorderly rank in time to the music.

*" There is a Bush that's overgrown,*
*Crop it well and prune it down*
*Or else it will be wild!"*

But they were not content with singing. One enterprising ruffian had caught a heron on the banks of the Avon and was clattering down the street in a farm wagon, holding the screaming, fluttering bird high above his head. The people cheered; the heron, they knew from the song, stood for Henry of Lancaster, and they took up the chorus again.

*" Upon this Bush the heron will rest.*
*Of all it likes this Bush the best*
*To perch while seeking prey!"*

Henry of Lancaster had come back to England to punish John Bushy and to destroy the men who wore the White Hart. The people had suffered their atrocities long enough, but had not dared to resist them for they were under the King's protection. Now people said the King was dead.

For if he were not dead, why did he not come back to stop them killing his precious friends, Bushy, Bagot and Green? If he were not dead he had deserted his people for Ireland: he had always hated England and loved Ireland—that was the only Kingdom he wanted. Well, they were quite satis-

fied; they didn't want him for their King, they wanted Henry of Lancaster.

They reached the White Hart Inn: they tore at the signboard and smashed the windows; they caught the King's servants, pulled off their badges and beat them. None of them knew why they did it nor why they hated the King, but it was plainly the only right and proper thing to do.

When they had finished their work of destruction, they swept on, shouting and singing. The Inn remained, with defaced walls and broken windows; and the sign lay a pitiful battered ruin on the muddy road. The painted hart stared up at the sky, but there was a great star-shaped hole, dug by some indignant heel, in place of the crown it had worn as a collar.

And so with the White Harts all over England.

At the same hour on this still August evening, the porter of the Castle of Conway opened the gates to his master in some bewilderment. He had expected to see a large army: but instead a little group of some five persons demanded admittance in the King's name. A Black Friar advanced towards him, and pushing back his hood disclosed the features of the King himself. With him were his brother and nephew the Dukes of Exeter and Surrey, Sir Stephen Scrope, and the Bishop of Carlisle. Their only attendants were the King's chaplain and his Gascon squire.

The Earl of Salisbury hurried out to greet them.

Richard looked at him for a moment and his face went first red then ashen grey. "Have they all deserted?" he rapped out, and drove his heels violently into his horse's sides. When the wretched animal danced with rage and pain he hit it furiously with his whip.

John Montague began to speak, but Richard stopped him. "We'll talk about it later. Not in public. Here, hold this horse, somebody." He dismounted when the animal was quieter and walked into the hall of the castle. "At present," he added, looking round at the others a little quizzically, "we all badly need something to eat."

John waited on him while he ate. He said through mouthfuls of venison that when he landed from Ireland at Milford Haven, he was told that a rumour had got about that he was dead. So he had hurried on in this disguise, leaving Aumerle to recruit the Welsh in the south, to show himself at Conway as soon as possible in case Salisbury's army should give him up. "But I see it was too late," he said, and frowned at his plate.

"I kept them a fortnight," said John, "but they were so convinced that you were dead that they wouldn't wait any longer. And there were forty thousand of them," he added tenderly.

"We can't get them back, I suppose?" asked the Duke of Exeter, but without hope.

"Hereford's reached Chester by now and more are joining him every day. I'm afraid I've made a hopeless mess of it."

"My dear John, you were in an impossible situation," Richard hastened to assure him. "I oughtn't to have stayed so long in Ireland, only we thought then it was better to wait till we had enough ships for the whole army to cross together. At all events it is in loyal hands now."

He remained for some time plunged in thought. Then: "Henry's at Chester, is he? Is it possible to march on to the town and besiege it if we sent for the army to come up north to us at once?"

Salisbury thought it was necessary to send for the army in any case, but he did not advise them to take the offensive. It was better, he thought, to remain in Wales, where it was difficult to be attacked, and make another attempt to rally the Welsh. Exeter suggested that in the meanwhile somebody should go and sound Henry as it was possible that he might come to terms. "We might put the fear of God into him by emphasising the enormity of the offence of making war on his King."

"He's hardened to that already," said Richard with weary patience. "His conscience must have ceased to prick long ago. I can't make out how he got the ships and men to come across. I suppose you haven't heard anything, have you, John?"

"I heard a story of his making some arrangement with the Duke of Orleans, but I don't know whether there's any truth in it." And Salisbury was going on to mention the executions of William Scrope and the three chamber knights, Bushy, Bagot and Green, of which he had heard at the same time; but he

checked himself. That would do, he thought, for another time.

Richard turned suddenly upon a servant who was changing the dishes. "What's this?" he inquired amiably. "Stewed stones?"

The man humbly begged for pardon: they hadn't known their gracious lord was coming: quinces took a lot of stewing: there were some apples, some pears, some peaches on the table in syrup as spicy as that of the quinces; would he like those instead?

Richard laughed and said he had eaten enough.

But the situation was very serious. With Henry's overpowering numbers he might force the King to give him anything he wanted, whether it was the crown or merely his own estates. And after the parliament of 1397, could Richard pass off with dignity the latter alternative, even if Henry mercifully spared him the former? At all events, some action must be taken, so while the King waited for his army at Conway, his brother of Exeter and his nephew of Surrey went on an embassy to Henry of Lancaster.

It was an anxious time for the party left at Conway, for the days went on and nothing was heard of the Duke of Aumerle and his army. They spent them in long, fruitless discussions, arguing over the question of how the situation had come about.

"Of course, if it hadn't been for the gales in July, we would have heard the news sooner and got over

in time to call out the White Harts."

"I would like to meet the man who first spread the rumour that the King was dead. That's what really did it."

"If only we hadn't waited for enough ships to get the whole army across at once. That was our big mistake."

Sometimes they would attempt to be constructive:

"As soon as Aumerle arrives, we march through Wales and collect the remnant of Salisbury's forty thousand."

"Meanwhile Henry hurries down from Chester through Hereford and Monmouth . . ."

"And suffers a crushing defeat somewhere about here"—and a spot on the speaker's knee would be indicated—"say Chepstow or Ross."

Then they would laugh at each other and drink to the defeat of Henry of Lancaster. But they were all afraid to admit to themselves what they really thought would happen.

On the third day, a knight from the royal army arrived at Conway. He said that so many stories had reached them of Henry's successes that the whole army had become demoralised and had hurried off to Chester to make its peace with the Duke of Lancaster.

"What action did the Duke of Aumerle take?" Richard asked in a very small, cold and distant voice.

"He's gone himself, sire. It was he who advised them all to do it, though I wouldn't have gone for love or money myself," he added with virtuous pride. "I'd sooner swing. But he said that otherwise it would mean certain death for all of us."

The King's friends looked fearfully at him. It was difficult to imagine how he would take this last blow, the treachery of Edward of Rutland. But what Richard saw was the face of Peter Felton, the knight who had brought the news of Robert's death; he was telling him the true facts of the campaign of Radcot Bridge. And the words he used were precisely those of the messenger standing in front of Richard now: "He told us not to retaliate. He said it would mean certain death for all of us."

He roused himself. "What happened to my luggage?" he asked suddenly, and the knight told him how the loyal army had broken open the chests and divided the spoils. "Some of us tried to stop the men," he stammered, "but it was quite impossible."

Richard stood up with one hand on his hip and looked down at himself in his friar's gown. "After all," he murmured, "black is very becoming to me."

## II

Of course it was exactly how Richard would behave, but it was nevertheless something of a miracle

WILTON DIPTYCH (Reverse of Right Panel)
*National Gallery*

to John Montague. Stephen Scrope thought it surprising that he had shown no passion when he heard of Aumerle's behaviour, but John knew his Richard better. He was seldom violent unless the person who annoyed was himself present: it seemed to be the physical appearance of the offender that filled him with a fury past control. (Richard had once told him that he believed he would have been free from the sin of sacrilege if he had not, that day in Westminster Abbey, suddenly noticed the shape of Arundel's ears.) On the other hand it was exactly like him to take such a dramatic pleasure in his adversities: he seemed to be tasting them as a connoisseur some rare wine. Yet it was miraculous: it was so perfectly and so gracefully done.

For more humiliations followed. When they retreated further into Wales, to Beaumaris and to Carnarvon, they found there was no furniture in the royal castles as they had not been used for fifty years. Yet Richard, although after a week he had to admit defeat and go back to Conway, accepted these discomforts with the same dramatic relish.

John would recall, for instance, the first evening at Beaumaris, when after a scratch meal on the floor Richard prepared for slumber on a heap of straw. He stretched himself luxuriously.

"There are times," he said, "when I have a craving for the ascetic life. But this is not one of them."

It was a remark that might have come from Robert de Vere. But Robert would have said it to

hide his feelings; Richard was thoroughly enjoying himself. With Robert it would have been reserve; with Richard it was almost self-indulgence.

John often had occasion these days to reflect upon Richard's life—its splendour, its courage and, as he feared, its tragic briefness. But as he was a poet, he did not always think in terms of words: when he thought of Richard, he saw a brilliant star glide along the floor of heaven and suddenly go out.

When the Earl of Northumberland came to the King from Henry of Lancaster, he formed an opinion of Richard's behaviour that was not so flattering. He expected a sensation when he made known Henry's request that the King should go to London and summon a parliament to judge five of his friends for treason. Any self-respecting King would have thumped violently upon the table and cursed both the Duke for his impertinence and himself for bringing such a message. But Richard only said, "Who are these five traitors?" with an irony that Northumberland altogether missed.

They were the Dukes of Exeter and Surrey (who at this moment were in custody at Chester), the Earl of Salisbury, the Bishop of Carlisle and the King's chaplain, Richard Maudelain. The Duke of Lancaster, continued Northumberland, was anxious to see the King personally and to beg for mercy for his rashness in raising arms against him; he proposed that they should both meet at Flint Castle if the King would accompany Northumberland there at once; that afterwards they should go to West-

minster, but if the King wished to take a different road from the Duke, of course he would be at liberty to do so.

"How many men have you brought with you?" Richard asked. The Earl assured him that there were only those four that he could see if he looked out into the courtyard. Richard looked out of the window and then said he would talk it over.

Northumberland was amused later by the King's insistence on his swearing on the Lord's Body that everything he said was true. For of course it wasn't: he had an army hiding in the pass through which the King must come on his way to Flint, and when that army surrounded him and his twenty followers, there would be no more talk of different roads to London. Northumberland's duty was to get the King out of Conway before he rallied the Welsh, and Richard certainly would not leave it unless he saw a chance of making his own way to Westminster. This obviously was not a time to worry about the perjury of one's soul.

"Very milk and water stuff," thought Northumberland. "The King is too craven even to be angry. He can't really believe me when I swear on the Sacrament."

Thomas Merke did not see Richard as the fool Northumberland saw, nor even the amazingly delicate artist that had so much impressed Lord Salisbury. He was certainly conscious of his audience and was playing up to them with spirit, but Merke

was given glimpses of his soul. For on the evening they arrived at Flint after being so basely betrayed by Northumberland, the Bishop sat a long time with the King, and in their talk all the barriers which their positions had set up, gradually broke down, and they warmed into being frankly and expansively themselves. Richard's horror at the situation in which he found himself was roused, Merke discovered, chiefly by his fear for his friends: always, he cried out in a fever of despair, he had been the means of bringing death or shame to people he loved. But Merke had been able to discuss their future and his own too, with a calmness that seemed to soothe his excited restless spirit, and taking his cue from the Bishop, he began to speak of the subject coolly and dispassionately, as if every reference to it were not agony.

"The question really is this," he said; "is Henry strong enough to depose me, or will he have to be content with accusing you all of treason. The old business of '87 over again." He looked gloomily into the future. "I suppose the decision now lies in the hands of the city of London: if they support me, Henry will have to content himself with a commission."

He was leaning against his bed now, twisting a piece of the curtain round his finger. "If I am deposed," he murmured, bending instantly over his task, "I hope I shall be free to go into a monastery."

"You! My dear Richard! Oh, I see—you're

thinking of a monastery as a place of sanctuary. I thought for the moment that you wanted to become a Religious."

"So I do," he said, and smiled at Merke's astonishment. "But I suppose it would be my duty to try and get back my Kingdom if I could. And then there's Isabel to be considered." And after that they talked of many things that were strange to the type of monk who was Bishop of Carlisle: the virtue of humility, the true *Via Dolorosa,* and the miraculous wisdom and sanity of the Benedictine Rule.

Henry of Lancaster was expected to arrive at Flint the morning after the King. Richard first heard Mass and then went up on to the castle wall with Thomas Merke and John Montague.

A sound of horns and trumpets indicated the approach of Henry of Lancaster. Richard leant over the battlements and watched their tiny figures moving like flies against the vastness of the sea. "The sixth step of humility," he murmured into Merke's ear alone, and Merke remembered how the Rule ran: *Sextus gradus humilitatis est si vilitate et extremitate contentus est monachus.*

But the next minute Richard had turned to John Montague and gave him a queer, twisted smile, turning down the corners of his mouth. "Do you recognise any of your forty thousand?" he said. John's forty thousand had become a joke.

"Is that Aumerle?" he asked a little later, when

it was possible to recognise their arms. "No," he muttered, his chin on his hand, "No. Robert would never have done that."

But nobody grasped the force of the third remark which was addressed neither to Montague nor to Merke, but to himself.

## CHAPTER III

All his life, Henry of Lancaster had felt a fool in the presence of his King. His childhood seemed to be one long nightmare in which his cousin and Robert de Vere were always laughing at something he didn't understand. They would look at him in such a way as to deprive him of all pleasure he might have taken in the fact that he was better (for his age) than either of them at fencing or wrestling; and when he assured himself that such things were more of a man's work than dancing or singing songs, he got little comfort out of his own assurances. His tormentors never said much: they merely looked at him and shrugged their shoulders. Often when roused, he would knock Richard down and beat his head against the floor, but Richard never hit back, he only went on laughing.

Since he had grown up, he prided himself that he bore Richard no malice for those early years. But for the sake of the Kingdom, he could not allow him to pursue his atrocious policy towards France unchecked. So, from a sense of duty, and from no personal feeling whatever, he had joined his uncle and Arundel in resisting him in 1387. All through the following years, he had been forced to object to Richard's control of his council and to the shameless way he wasted the country's money, and when people said that it lay with him, Henry, to turn this

incompetent sovereign off the throne in favour of Roger Mortimer, he realised that it was again his duty to attempt to do so. Finally, when the Arundels came to Paris—the ex-Archbishop and the young Earl his nephew—to assure him that if he came to England when Richard was in Ireland, he would only be doing his duty by the poor oppressed people, he decided that in the interests of the Kingdom he should come.

Yet his virtue seemed to have lost its edge. He felt like a little boy again—and rather a silly little boy at that. Richard, now safely in the Tower of London, had sent a message that he wished to see him, and Henry didn't want to see him at all. Away from Richard, he could feel himself rather a fine person: in his presence he only felt an absolute fool.

He thought of his meeting with him at Flint. He had arrived, hoping to find him humiliated at last: Northumberland had told him to expect it. But as he stood in the hall and watched the King come down the steps of the dais to meet him, he began to feel that queer childish sensation over again. Richard's black gown accentuated the paleness of his face and the brightness of his hair; his eyes glinted and the corners of his mouth curled. He stood quite still looking at Henry, who found himself bowing lower than he had intended.

"You are welcome, cousin of Lancaster," he had said with the most chilling courtesy.

Henry was sufficiently his own master to deliver himself of his carefully thought out phrases. He

had come, he said, in response to the people's petition that he should help the King to rule his Kingdom better, for they were complaining that he had governed it very badly of late; he trusted that this would be pleasing to the King.

Richard never took his eyes off him. "If it pleases you, it pleases us," he said; and Henry did not miss the irony.

Then there had been the entry into London. He wanted most particularly to show that he had only brought the King semi-captive to the city at the people's wish, and that they were to decide his fate. Therefore, when the crowd met them outside the walls, he had caught the bridle of Richard's horse and had led him forward.

"Here is your King," he had said with studied simplicity, "what will you do with him?"

But the crowd was shouting for him, Henry of Lancaster. They would not admit that Richard was their King.

Henry had not been able to resist looking at his cousin to see how he was taking it. This man who had talked so much of his regality, who maintained that he alone was the fit governor of his people, even if it meant selling them to France, was now to learn precisely what his people thought of him. But suddenly a cold sweat had broken out over Henry as he remembered that this was not the first time that Richard had faced a mob. He might win yet.

Richard's face had flushed and his veins stood out on his forehead. He was looking very hard at

his horse's mane, and Henry could see that he felt his position horribly. But he said nothing.

"We will have him taken to Westminster," said the mayor, and the people shouted their assent. But as Henry saw his cousin being led through the gates of his own capital and could assure himself that it was indeed the people's will that Richard should be King no longer, some very curious words came into his mind and nearly slipped off his tongue. They were: "I have washed my hands of this deed." He couldn't think why they entered his head at that particular moment, nor why they seemed vaguely familiar. It was not till quite a long time afterwards that he remembered that they had once been spoken by Pontius Pilate, and then he was filled with horror and fear.

Now Richard was safely in the Tower. But it was most important to get an abdication out of him as the country was full of his friends, and at present Henry's claim rested on the sole foundation of might. Apparently he had refused to sign it unless he could speak with Henry first; and to speak with him was the last thing Henry wanted to do.

But he had to go. He felt vicious about going and wondered if there were any way of subtly insulting Richard without earning the contempt of those moderate persons whom his previous courtesy towards the King had won over to his side. He had just recovered the Lancaster jewels that Richard had attempted to steal from him, and to wear one of these would quietly remind his cousin of the humili-

ating fact that all acts passed in his name were now null and void. He found among his father's amazing array of gold collars one ornamented with broomscods: it was the gift of Charles of France in 1394. "He will recognise that one," he thought and put it on.

As he rode to the Tower, he wondered uneasily how Richard would receive him. Although it was his hour of triumph, he knew from experience that he would not get much joy out of it. Richard could hardly adopt that attitude of mocking scorn that had graced his dealings with his cousin in the past: but he would rather that, he felt, than the cold dignity and politeness with which he had accepted his recent humiliations.

The room was full of people standing about in groups talking very quietly. There was a general atmosphere of suspense and restraint. Richard was standing with his back to the door by which Henry had entered and was talking in low tones to Archbishop Arundel. But he turned when Henry was announced and greeted him with a curt nod. Then he went on talking to the Archbishop.

But Henry was not kept waiting long. The King suddenly wheeled round upon his cousin with the parchment upon which his abdication was written still rolled up in his hand. "Now look here, Henry," he said. "I'm not going to sign this unless you give up the idea of impeaching my friends of treason. Is that clear?"

Henry was not in the least prepared for this. He

thought Richard would have been too proud to bargain with him and hardly in the position to be hostile. But he saw that he meant what he said, and realised that he himself must give in, for Richard's voluntary abdication was of more value to him than any number of acts of parliament.

"It's perfectly clear," he said at last, smoothly. "If you sign this, nobody need be involved in any charge of treason, because it is your wish to resign the crown."

Richard looked at him curiously. "You'll witness that, uncle?" he said, turning to Edmund of Langley who was standing beside him. "Then I should like a safe conduct for myself to get over to France. Or Italy, the Empire, anywhere you like," as Henry looked black. "Oh, my dear Henry," he persisted with a sudden good-humoured banter that took Henry by surprise; "you must do something with me. I quite see you won't want to have me loose about England, but I don't much relish the idea of ending my days in honourable captivity."

"Very well," Henry yielded. "I will get the safe-conduct written out."

Then Richard walked forward into the middle of the room and the low anxious murmuring gave way to silence. "Gentlemen," he said, "I have been asked to sign this document which I will now read you. But first allow me to assure you that I shall sign it with my free will." And he read out the statement that since he had governed his Kingdom so badly, he was ready to resign it to more capable

hands than his own. He read it very calmly and impersonally, but he read it so that Henry who was listening felt that he had never heard such a fatuous ill-worded document.

Then he sat down at a table and took the pen that had been put ready for him. But before he wrote his name, he looked up at Henry and the corners of his mouth twitched. It was enough to make Henry writhe.

He looked at his signature with his head on one side. He seemed proud of it. Then he leant back in his chair and studied Henry carefully, looking him up and down. "You'll want my signet ring," he observed presently and began to examine his rings minutely. "No, that's no use to you," he murmured half to himself, "that's the one with my name on it." Finally he drew off one stamped with the royal arms and held it out to Henry on the palm of his hand. But why did the whole situation make Henry feel so ridiculously small? He nearly dropped the ring.

Then Richard sat back again in his chair and resumed his study of Henry. But suddenly he saw the Broomscod Collar round Henry's neck, and for a moment he stared at it narrowly with his mouth open, and his eyes narrowing for a clearer scrutiny as if he did not believe them. Then his mouth slowly broadened into a smile.

It was the last time that Henry was in the ignominious position of being unable to see the joke.

THE END

# NOTE

The picture known as the Wilton Diptych appearing on page 38 was bought from Lord Pembroke by the trustees of the National Gallery in June 1929, and has been the subject of considerable controversy, both as to authorship and date. The final word upon the subject was made by Sir Martin Conway in an article written for the *Burlington Magazine*, November 1929, in which he concluded that the picture was in all probability English and painted in 1377 to commemorate Richard's coronation. But Sir Martin does not refer to the presence of either the crusading banner or the Broomscod Collars worn by Richard and the eleven angels, both of which suggest to me a different reason for the painting of the picture.

13/1

6 MAY 1932